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"PASSION" IN THE SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

A Study of Detachment and Diminishment

A DISSERTATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter

I. A PERSONALISTIC UNIVERSE. 15

His Method
The Place of God
His Creed
The Universe is an Evolution
Evolution is Going Towards Spirit
Spirit in Man is Developed in the Personal
The Supreme Personal is the Christ-Universal
Personal Development: the Leitmotif

II. GROWTH THROUGH DETACHMENT. 56

The Role of Jesus Christ
The Role of Grace
The Role of Saints
The Role of Faith
Activity
Intention
Detachment

III. DIMINISHMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT 99

The Christian Context
The Role of Passivities
The Types of Passivities
Passivities of Growth
Passivities of Diminishment
The Role of Death
Sin as Diminishment
Our Attitude Towards Diminishment
Growth through Diminishment
Christian Resignation
Renunciation and Sacrifice

Chapter Page
IV. A PERSONAL WITNESS 144

His Life
His Letters
Detachment
Diminishment
Death
His Prayer

V. COUNSELOR AND COMFORTER 201

The Family
His Cousin
Léontine Zanta
Two Friends
Various Individuals

VI. THE CHRISTIAN PASSION. 251

Vision and Direction
Matter and Spirit
Intention and Action
Attachment and Detachment
Activity and Passivity
A New Holiness
Effort and Detachment
Christ and Cosmos
Expiatory Asceticism vs. Asceticism of Cosmic Life

BIBLIOGRAPHY 276

ABBREVIATIONS

Works of Teilhard de Chardin (Oeuvres)

PM	*The Phenomenon of Man* OE I
AM	*The Appearance of Man* OE II
VP	*The Vision of the Past* OE III
DM	*The Divine Milieu* OE IV
FM	*The Future of Man* OE V
HE	*L'Énergie Humaine* OE VI
AE	*L'Activation de l'Énergie* OE VII
MPN	*Man's Place in Nature* OE VIII
SC	*Science and Christ* OE IX
HU	*Hymn of the Universe*
WTW	*Writings in Time of War*
or Ecrits	(if essay is to be found only in the French work)
BE	*Building the Earth* (Cahier I)
Album	*Teilhard de Chardin Album*

Collections of Letters of Teilhard de Chardin

Egypt	*Letters from Egypt 1905-1908*
Hastings	*Letters from Hastings 1908-1912*
Paris	*Letters from Paris 1912-1914*
MM	*The Making of a Mind*
LT	*Letters from a Traveller*
TF	*Letters to Two Friends 1926-1952*
Zanta	*Letters to Léontine Zanta*
Correspondence	*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Maurice Blondel Correspondence*

Note: In footnote references, the English page numbers are given first when translations are available; then F (signalling French edition) and its page numbers follow. H after PM signifies Harper Torchbooks.

ms - after the title of an essay signifies the manuscript form in which I had access to Teilhard's unpublished writings.

For an overall view of writings by and about Teilhard de Chardin and for more complete information on material cited in shortened form in the footnotes of this study, consult the Bibliography at the end of this volume.

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INTRODUCTION

"Every spiritual adventure is a Calvary."

Teilhard quoting Bernanos notebook,
1954.

Sometimes a single word can so capture a character trait in a man that it sums up his person and his life. For Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, passion becomes such a word.

In its Latin etymology passion refers to a state of "letting something happen" or a "suffering." Passion is contrasted with action. For example, we traditionally use the word passion in referring to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and the final two-week period of Lent is called Passiontide. But far more often in our modern languages, passion emphasizes rather the dynamic drive in man, which stems from his emotive or affective side. Usually a "powerful" or "compelling" aspect is associated with the notion of passion. We imply a certain compulsion when we speak of someone having a "passion for fresh strawberries." In various forms of the word passion, we describe a very amorous kiss as passionate or a stirring speech as impassioned. While the modern word passion, then, has predominantly taken on a quite active meaning, there remains still a glimmer of its ambivalence and a recognition of its more primitive meaning of a "being acted upon."[1]

An essential part of Teilhard de Chardin's character is grasped when we take in the full meaning and implication of this word, passion. He described himself as a man with a passion for the world and a passion for God.[2] It was a good insight into his own personality, and it also sums up his life's work. Teilhard was possessed of such a powerful drive that every scientific "expedition" from the time of his youth in the 1880's to his old age in the early 1950's was an exhilarating adventure.[3] It was a passion that impelled him to express over and over again his fundamental vision of the universe in order to share it with other men. The impulse of his whole life was to seek out God in and through this world of matter--a union or coherence of his twin passions.[4]

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[1] In The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (The Unabridged Edition, 1966), we find the first nine meanings for passion in the active sense, ranging from any general emotion or feeling to a specific identification with love, lust, anger, and so on. The last three meanings listed deal with the passive sense, with one entry devoted exclusively to the Passion of Jesus Christ.--A parallel breakdown is found in A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage, also published by Random House.

[2] MM, Jan. 9, 1917, p. 165 (F 213).

[3] Cf. Teilhard's autobiographical essay, "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms.

[4] "As far back as I can remember (before I was six years old) I find existing in myself a strictly dominating passion: the passion for the Absolute." Ecrits, "Mon Univers," 1917, p. 269 (This essay is not included in the English translation, WTW.).--Another example of this same thought is found among his retreat notes of 1944: "Live under the exclusive dominance of a single passion: the impassioned desire to help forward the synthesis of Christ and the universe." HU, p. 100 (F 107). Also see "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., p. 20.

Not only do most of his writings evoke the impassioned cry of a prophet and seer, but the very word *passion* (and its derivatives) is continuously sprinkled throughout his works.[5] It would certainly rank as one of his favorite and most frequently used words. There is no doubt that Teilhard himself relies on the modern-day meaning of *passion.* At the same time, however, we can see by means of his writings a much fuller expression in this word.[6] By his use, *passion* in its active sense not only does not exclude *passion* taken in its original, passive meaning, but it should be a positive part of our "being acted upon." For Teilhard, the human drive which passion signifies should be a force behind all actions--even the dull and routine.[7] At the same time, this very passion should likewise be the force necessary for all that has to be accepted or suffered, including our own shortcomings and our unavoidable defeats. Because Teilhard saw even the Passion of our Lord as the most active of divine actions, he viewed all other personal "passions" in its light.[8]

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[5] H. de Lubac, *L'éternel féminin* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), pp. 171-77, is the only commentator, to my knowledge, that has reflected on the Teilhardian use of *passion.* de Lubac, however, considers *passion* briefly and only in relation to his context of the *feminine.*

[6] For example, Teilhard identifies passion and faith in *MM*, Sept. 29, 1918, p. 241 (F 313); passion and a sense of totality in *VP*, "Basis and Foundations of the Idea of Evolution," 1926, pp. 140-41 (F 195-96); passion and love in *WTW*, "The Mystical Milieu," 1917, p. 121 (F 140-41) and in *HE,* "L'énergie humaine," 1937, pp. 187-90. (This last essay in edited form is also to be found in *BE,* pp. 49 ff.)--E. Rideau, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to His Thought* (London: Collins, 1967), p. 106, describes the Teilhardian notion of passion in this way: "Passion is lasting and true to itself, and is the permanent dynamism that maintains the pursuit of some value." He contrasts Teilhard's use of *passion* with his use of *emotion,* which is shorter lived and concentrated. According to Rideau, emotion and passion are subsumed under the supreme form of human energy--love.

[7] According to Teilhard, *passion* is not something to be suppressed. It is a force coming from the deepest sources of our being and therefore it is a movement towards fuller or better being or life. Man, in his freedom, must direct this force. See H. de Lubac, *L'éternel féminin,*

Nothing in the Teilhardian perspective was just "accepted" or "allowed to happen." Even the bed-ridden sufferer had to be fired with passion, for only then did suffering (passion) take on its full meaning for man. Since Teilhard liked to contrast the two parts of man's life with distinct expressions such as activities--what a man does, and passivities--what happens to him, he could well apply, without confusion, the word passion to describe the total experience. For human development, a man could and should be just as passionate or impassioned, just as forceful, in his trials and diminutions as in his accomplishments and conquests.

So it is to the whole spectrum of man's life that passion applies. According to Teilhard, all of evolution is a way of the Cross.[9] Certainly he did not mean that evolution and life is nothing but pain and suffering. But he was putting an emphasis on the Passion of Christ as a key to the

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pp. 168-70, and M. Barthélemy-Madaule, La personne et le drame humain chez Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Seuil, 1967), p. 133, for a similar observation about Teilhard's use of feminine.

[8] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, pp. 67-68 (F 56-57); also SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 62 (F 90-91). Teilhard sees the true meaning of the Cross as "towards progress through effort." TF, Sept. 8, 1948, p. 187.

[9] PM, "Appendix," p. 342 (H 311 F 348).

vision he had of man's development. Our understanding of that vision is not to be found in any sort of word-count or a narrow fixing-upon passion. Rather the total scope of meaning implied in both the active and passive sense of passion and its role in the personal and spiritual growth of man provide the subject-matter for this particular study of Teilhard's writings.

Teilhard de Chardin has captured a great deal of interest and support both within the Church and outside it. People are enthused by his worldview, his optimism, his call for activity and the building of the earth. The contemporary emphasis on growth and personal development easily attunes itself to such a message. But far too often in the case of Teilhard, it seems that only half his message is heard or read.[10]

Although there is no denying the activist trend in Teilhard's works, we find upon closer reading and deeper understanding a great awareness of man's possible passivity in the face of life. There are two parts to every man's existence--the active and the passive--and they are quite unequal.[11] Every man likes to measure his life in terms of the work he does, the success he has, the discoveries he makes. In the midst of fixing his eyes on his activities, man almost suppresses his constant acquiescence to his natural deficiencies, his restrictive environment, his own failures and defeats. These kinds of passivities are far more widespread and more immeasurable than any amount of accomplishment. Yet man has a tendency to try to ignore or even sometimes to run away from them because he feels so helpless. What a man has no control over, he likes to consider a waste-product. It has no positive value in a human world.

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[10] G. Frénaud, Pensée philosophique et religieuse du Père Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: M. Jehan de Saint-Chamas, 1965), p. 40, criticizes the "activist" spirituality of Teilhard which leaves people attached to the world as their way to God. As he and other critics like him have interpreted Teilhard's spirituality or taken only "half his message," such a proposed holiness would indeed be very deficient.

[11] The division into activity and passivity is most clearly expressed and developed in The Divine Milieu.

From a Christian point of view, suffering or what happens to a man can be traditionally "offered up," but even in this case it is passed over quickly and relegated to the dark mystery of iniquity. In manuals of Christian spirituality, a man's spiritual maturity--his holiness--was often seemingly based on a detachment that was a timidity to fight and a resignation that was a failure to struggle. Teilhard declared an all-our war on this erroneous impression of what it means to accept the will of God. His struggle was made all the harder because this type of benumbing behavior was sometimes interpreted as a true Christian identification with the Passion of Jesus Christ. In this sense, the more Christian act appeared to be the less human act. A personal development of oneself in which a man must take a very active part would seem to be at odds with a spiritual development which focused on the passive sense of passion.

Teilhard could not accept the idea that the greater part of man's life could be a waste or should be crossed off as of no value. An insight into his attitude can be gleaned from the way he lived and made use of passion. It may not be hard to be forceful or compelling in one's work, but it is unusual to see a man just as forceful or compelling in what he has to suffer. Teilhard lived the truth of this activity-passivity make-up of human living, and his writings express the reflections which he has made on his experience. If he felt the drives necessary for life's activities to be so compelling, he was even more convinced that the greater half of man's life--his passivities--must be lived just as passionately or with just as much drive. In its fullest comprehension, then, passion should mark the passivities of man--his losses, his failures, his suffering, and even his death.[12]

Many of the accounts of early Christian martyrs express this kind of passion as they ran forward to the lions or embraced the burning stake. Teilhard himself expressed the wish that our age might witness the passion of a new St. Francis of Assisi or a new St. Ignatius Loyola in order to understand more fully Christian holiness in our day.[13] It is not unusual, then, to consider man's whole life and particularly his passivities in terms of an all-encompassing passion. In fact, it would seem to be an emphasis that is needed today when the notion of sufferings or diminutions in any form are fled from by those who advocate only the positive values of personal development. We cannot hide from the fact that through much of life we seem to be "victims." This negative side of life where man might feel most helpless and crippled is the area that Teilhard forces us to re-examine. He calls us to make use of it with all the fervor that we bring to our most enthusiastic activity. His message to modern man: "we must be men of passion."[14] We must be men who accept the whole of life with the fondness and force of a saint.

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[12] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 67 (F 56).

[13] Letter to Auguste Valensin, June 21, 1921, cited by H. de Lubac, The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin (New York: Desclée, 1967), p. 20.

Perhaps only a saint could bring such passion to the whole of life. For Teilhard, the value of passion itself is totally measured in its relation to God.[15] God, ultimately, is the only reason that can keep a man passionately involved in all of life's activities. We are building the earth--for God. Even more necessary is the relationship to God when we consider the passivities of man's existence. It is only because of God that a man can passionately welcome all setbacks and even death in order to reach new thresholds of life. A passion for activity--for God;

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[14] According to Teilhard, the maturation of the world will be at that time when man has arrived at a single passion, that is to say, "a single mysticism." AM, "The Singularities of the Human Species," 1954, p. 267 (F 365).

[15] During his retreat in 1940, Teilhard expressed the idea in the following manner: "Completely suspended from Him: in my cohesion, my action, even in my perception of and passion for Him." Cf. Correspondence, p. 152.

a passion for passivity--because of God. For men of our times, this would seem to summarize Teilhard's definition of the saint.

Teilhard wrote no books on how to become a saint. His most developed treatment of the spiritual life is The Divine Milieu, written in 1927. Although the theory was substantially complete, as Teilhard reflects in 1950, it was not yet practice. He himself had to run the risk and face the disquiet of leaving a path of asceticism which was traditional, but still less than human in his eyes.[16] For true spiritual development has to be human development too, just as man's faith in the world cannot be in conflict with his faith in God. According to Teilhard, the development of this world and the intellectual, social, and spiritual growth of man are both of one piece.

As a result, it will be necessary to begin our study with at least a brief sketch of the Teilhardian universe. Working within this total picture, we can more readily understand the theory which he proposes for the full development of man. By following Teilhard, we will find our emphasis fixed upon that greater part of our lives--what seems to many to be so futile and empty--our passivities. Then we will move from the more theoretical presentation of his view to trace the practice in Teilhard's own life, especially in his letters of instruction or encouragement for his family, relatives, and friends. For it is only if we grasp the vision of Teilhard and his contribution in this area of human development that we will appreciate his pattern of growth for whole and holy men in our times.

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[16] "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., p. 25.

Two observations preliminary to our study are necessary. The first deals with the determination of what writings of Teilhard should be characterized as "spiritual" and then whether a chronological order is important. According to Rideau, Teilhard's strictly scientific articles and notes between the years 1921 to 1955 number one hundred and sixty-three.[17] If we peruse the titles listed in Cuénot's bibliography, we find some rather obvious examples, such as "Cenozoic Vertebrate Fossils of E. Kansu and Inner Mongolia" (1923), "Joint Geological and Prehistoric Studies in the Late Cenozoic in India" (1936), and "New Rodents of the Pliocene and Lower Pleistocene of North China" (1942).[18] But once we get beyond these research reports, we are left with numerous essays which, though not strictly spiritual such as The Divine Milieu or "The Mass on the World," have important implications for spirituality. They range from various essays included in the volume of Teilhard's works, entitled The Appearance of Man, to his master work, The Phenomenon of Man. And so "spiritual" writings include all the writings that are concerned with the development of the human.

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[17] E. Rideau, Guide, p. 28.

[18] C. Cuénot, Teilhard de Chardin (London: Burns and Oates, 1965). The Bibliography of Teilhard's works runs from p. 409 to p. 485; it is still one of the most complete and authoritative.

Logically a later expression of a man's thought has more authority and clarity than its earlier statement. This is usually true of Teilhard de Chardin, and he himself has helped by reviewing his thought over the years in his autobiographical essay, "Le Coeur de la Matière."[19] Essentially Teilhard's worldview is complete in his early writings, and he remains constant in his basic insight. As a general rule, then, a later essay is not more authoritative in its viewpoint than an earlier one. But it may have the advantage of being a clearer and more adequate expression of his vision.[20]

Our second observation concerns a language problem, and more specifically the problem of translation. As Bernard Wall noted at the beginning of The Divine Milieu, the French word milieu was retained throughout the work more by necessity than by choice.[21] Since milieu implies both "center" and "environment" or "setting," there really was no exact all-inclusive English equivalent. Teilhard deliberately intends to make use of the full implications of certain key words in order to express the comprehension of his insight--like the idea of passion in our study.[22] Another example is the word foyer. The French word includes the notion of the "entrance way," the "threshold"; Teilhard employs this usage especially when he speaks of the new levels reached in the flow of evolution and human development. But the French word also means the "fireplace," "hearth," or "center of warmth." And so the divine foyer, just like milieu, is sometimes identified with God. It takes on still richer meaning when referring to the warmth and heat of love coming forth from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Since fire is a favorite image-word for Teilhard,[23] it is often used in conjunction with foyer, especially to describe the movement of the Spirit of Christ.[24] One way of solving the difficulty in handling a word like foyer is to leave it in the original French, as was done in the case of milieu; the other possibility is to translate according to context. Either way something of the Teilhardian rich perspective is lost for the English reader.

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[19] "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., pp. 1-34. This essay is to be included in the tenth volume of Teilhard's works.

[20] E. Rideau's opinion is that "no study of Teilhard's thought can, in fact, demarcate the stages of its progress. Remarkably unified and consistent as it was, it was subject not so much to a series of deviations as to a continuous maturing and development." Guide, p. 27.--Teilhard himself wrote in "Le christique," 1955, ms., p. 2: "Today, after forty years of constant reflexion, it is still exactly the same fundamental vision that I feel the need to set forth and to share, in its mature form, for the last time."

[21] DM, "Note," p. 10. Even despite this prefatory remark by the English editor, a commentator such as G. H. Duggan, S.M., Teilhardism and the Faith (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1968), p. 12, is at a complete loss to understand how Teilhard can use the same word, milieu, in reference to God, the noosphere, the earth.

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[22] R. Speaight, The Life of Teilhard de Chardin (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 275, quite appropriately observes: "It is most unlikely that Teilhard had ever read a line of Dr. Johnson, but he might have taken comfort from the Doctor's dictum: 'Difference of thought will produce difference of language. He that thinks with more extent than another will want words of larger meaning.' "

[23] See Correspondence, Ch. 7, p. 109, footnote 6.

[24] For a unique study of Teilhard's contribution to the role of the Spirit, see E. Cousins, "Teilhard and the Theology of the Spirit," Cross Currents, 19 (1969), 159-77.

A slightly different problem arises with Teilhard's use of the word enroulement. The difficulty comes from trying to find a meaningful English expression. Translators have tried "coiling," "involution," and "inturning process."[25] The French word describes a movement similar to a man filling in a circle by each rounded stroke of his pen, always moving in towards the center. Or perhaps we might better compare the movement to a roll of paper which has been elongated in the form of a cone so that each circle of paper is more compressed than the previous until a peak is reached. While enroulement is an important concept in the Teilhardian notion of evolution, it also well describes the movement of his own thought. His essays repeat each other quite a bit as he "circles in" on an explanation of his worldview. A similar type of "coiling" is reflected in this study of passion.

A final word which needs to be singled out is Teilhard's use of feminine. For Teilhard, the feminine includes all the light-giving and "idealizating" power which a woman can exercise,[26] all the unitive and spiritualizing force which is her special contribution to an understanding and appreciation of the energy of love, especially as manifested by God. The feminine cannot be understood apart from woman; at the same time, it cannot be narrowly fixed upon woman as a concrete reality. In Teilhard's own image, the feminine is after the manner of Dante's Béatrice.[27] Passion and the feminine are intimately connected since in both we are dealing with drives or forces. Both have an active and a passive aspect to them. Both are essential for the full development of man.[28] The feminine could be a complete study in itself. We will specifically call attention to it only when it seems necessary for a better or more accurate understanding of Teilhard's message.

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[25] "Involution" has been more commonly used by Bernard Wall and René Hague. Norman Denny in his translation of The Future of Man has usually employed the term, "coiling." This point has also attracted the attention of C. Mooney, S.J., Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ (London: Collins, 1966), pp. 223-24, footnote 10.

[26] In MM, Aug. 29, 1916, p. 121 (F 154-55), Teilhard asks forgiveness for "that ghastly word"--"idealizating."

This study will have served its purpose if it presents Teilhard's contribution to the personal and spiritual development of man, especially in the seemingly negative aspects of detachment and diminishment.

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[27] Cf. the dedication of his essay, "The Eternal Feminine," 1918, in WTW, p. 191 (F 249). As the editor of this essay notes, Teilhard also availed himself of the well-known expression of Goethe, "Das Ewig-Weibliche," from Faust, end of Part 2. H. de Lubac, in L'éternel féminin, p. 26, explains that Teilhard deliberately used the puzzling spelling of Béatrix in his dedication rather than the normal French word Béatrice since he thereby disassociates the word from any particular woman (beyond even Dante's) in order to refer to "the Feminine"--ultimately, however, personified in the Virgin Mary.

[28] About the feminine, Teilhard wrote: "no access to spiritual maturity and fullness is possible without some 'sentimental' influence which increases the sensitivity of man's mind and excites, at least initially, his power to love." "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., Clausule, p. 33. Similarly about passion, Teilhard commented that "the energy which nourishes us and weaves our interior life is primitively of a passionate nature." "L'évolution de la chasteté," 1934, ms., p. 5.

CHAPTER I

A PERSONALISTIC UNIVERSE

> ". . . to unite all things in him, things
> in heaven and things on earth."
> Ephesians 1:10

The development of the person is necessary for spiritual growth. In the total world of Teilhard de Chardin, this relation must be well understood. For him, there was a real confluence of authentic personal growth and spiritual growth.[1] Such a relation was not an example of the facile concordism, which was the charge laid against much of his work even during his own lifetime.[2] He was well aware of the too simplistic tailoring of religious revelation to fit scientific data and the dangers for both areas of man's life which follows from such an attempt.[3] Although concordism is not to be valued because it denies the individuality present in the real world, a coherence among the branches of man's knowledge and the results of his experiences is a goal worth seeking. This coherence is the vision that Teilhard hopes to share with others.[4]

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[1] The fact that "Christian" and "human" tend no longer to coincide Teilhard calls the great schism which threatens the Church. See *Ecrits*, "Note pour servir à l'évangélisation des temps nouveaux," 1919, pp. 369-71.

[2] For example, Teilhard's brief review of the anonymous *L'évolution rédemptrice du P. Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cèdre, 1950) disclaimed specifically the charge of concordism, implied in the very title of the book. Cf. Études, 266 (Sept., 1951), 284.--P. Grenet, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin ou le philosophe malgré lui* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), p. 14, takes the argument one step beyond by speaking of an "ultra-concordism" in Teilhard's thought.

In taking up, then, the overall view of Teilhard's personalistic universe, we are entering the necessary door for an understanding of human spiritual development. We might compare the Teilhardian world-view to a richly woven tapestry. Individual threads may attract our eye, for they appear either beautiful in themselves or perhaps bizarre in their unusual quality. But no attempt should be made to appreciate these individual threads unless we acknowledge their role in the makeup of the whole tapestry. In Teilhard's writings, threads of "physics," religious apologetic, and mysticism are woven together into a coherent universe.[5] It is into this world that we must find our way.

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[3] "We must take care not to confuse concordism with coherence." "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., p. 1. Earlier in the same year, Teilhard wrote: "If we compare the domain of mind to a sphere, I hold that the mistake of concordism is that it runs the meridians together in the region of the equator (the meridian of science and the meridian of faith). However these meridians must meet somewhere at a pole (if, from a scientific and religious point of view, you look at the whole)--they must, that is, obey certain general structural conditions (such as the organic laws of union); and it is only this coherence (not concordance) that I defend." Letter to Auguste Valensin, April 20, 1948, cited in E. Rideau, Guide, p. 423, footnote 114, and p. 279, footnote 1. P. Smulders, The Design of Teilhard de Chardin (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1967), pp. 19-21, defends Teilhard for his attempt to gain for men a "firm interior concord" which is not a concordism. Also G. Crespy, Le pensée théologique de Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1961), p. 62.

[4] Coherence is an important concept in Teilhard's thought. For him coherence is most clearly symbolized in the unified musical tone which results from the blending of various distinct musical pitches. He sees value in the unified whole which coherence gives to any one section of man's knowledge such as creation and incarnation or to man's total worldview: "The 'whole' would be like a new dimension to which all our concepts would have to be adapted, and in which alone they could become truly meaningful . . . no concept holding strictly true except for the whole." Letter to Auguste Valensin, Oct. 20, 1919, cited in Rideau, Guide, p. 506, footnote 26.

His Method

The difficulty of drawing even a sketchy outline of the Teilhardian world stems from his way of approaching a problem. In fact, much of the criticism of his writings arises out of the inability of certain minds to cope with what they see as a lack of methodology. Teilhard admittedly does not make the job of evaluating his thought easy. His writings are a coherence of intellectual reasoning, sense-impression experiences, scientific data, and Christian revelation--what we might call a fully human exposition.[6] If one has only an intellectual yardstick, it is quite impossible to measure "redness" as a color or to share the sound of a certain musical tone. Teilhard himself wished that he had the ability of a musical composer in order that he could better express the richness of his experience.[7] What he perceived and felt--a total openness to the world around him--was so necessary an ingredient in his thought that no one could accuse him seriously of writing only poetic imaginings.[8] His own methodology develops from a continued search for a clearer and more adequate expression of his vision. It does not imply that other methods are wrong, but rather that the customary ways of approach were inadequate to explain or "size up" his world picture.[9]

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[5] Teilhard uses this threefold division to describe his own thought in "La pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin - par lui-même pour un article qui devant lui être consacré," 1948, published in Les études philosophiques, 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1955), 580-81.

[6] MM, June 29, 1916, pp. 106-107 (F 134-35). N. M. Wildiers, An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin (London: Collins, 1968), p. 49, describes Teilhard's method as an attempt to construct a true science of totality which would hold "a kind of middle position between the various natural sciences on the one hand and philosophy proper on the other." Rideau, Guide, pp. 237-39, for his part, sees Teilhard's method in a more philosophical light, embracing the datum provided by nature as well as by Christian revelation in a synthesis or at least a clearly defined dialectical relationship. Smulders, Design, pp. 14-23, seems to capture

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best the spirit of the Teilhardian methodology when he tries to describe both the phenomenological method and the distinctive style which is integral to its presentation.

[7] "I try to translate the species of calm intoxication produced in me by an awareness of the profound substance of things into theories (how I wish I could translate it into music!), but these theories really matter to me only by their vibrations in a province of the soul which is not that of intellectualism. . . . Fundamentally, it is not possible to transmit directly by words the perception of a quality, a taste. Once again, it would be more to my purpose to be a shadow of Wagner than a shadow of Darwin." TF, Feb. 14, 1927, p. 59.

[8] That Teilhard does have a poetic gift is pointed up by C. Cuénot, Teilhard, p. 42, who says that "his lyric works rank with the finest of the world's religious poetry." But Cuénot also notes that Teilhard's poetic talent is accompanied "by the power to handle abstract ideas and construct a solidly framed argument."--From an openly unsympathetic point of view, J. Maritain, The Peasant of the Garonne (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 148-49, stresses that Teilhard's works form one vast poem which furnishes no rational knowledge content--whether scientific, philosophical, or theological.

[9] C. Tresmontant, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin - His Thought (Baltimore: Helicon, 1959), pp. 18-22, interprets Teilhard's desire for a new methodology arising out of his effort to read the direction of evolution in reality and to communicate his insight to others.

Teilhard gave fair warning to both philosophers and scientists alike that no one branch of man's knowledge is wholly applicable to his view.[10] Though scientifically bent, he draws upon all the areas of knowledge with which he is familiar.[11] This is particularly true in the choice of terms without which it is impossible to write or speak in a somewhat technical way. At the same time, he recognizes the difficulty in breaking words out from encrusted connotations. For this reason or sometimes just for lack of any word at all, Teilhard occasionally coins his own terms.[12] In great part, however, the problem of terminology ordinarily passes when one gains a familiarity with the style and movement of his thought.[13]

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[10] PM, "Preface," pp. 31-33 (H 29-30; F 21-23) where Teilhard claims to write a scientific treatise, but admits that by dealing with the whole phenomenon of man his work may look more like a philosophy. He tries to call it in this case a "hyperphysics."

[11] That Teilhard was respected by his contemporaries in various fields is demonstrated in the following quote from one of his own letters: "Père Maréchal of Louvain has done me the honor of writing to me in answer to a short paper on 'the place of man in nature' which was printed here last year in the 'Bulletin des étudiants de Pekin': 'There is no one today who has such a grasp as you have of all the material bearing on the problem of evolution--theological, philosophical, and scientific. . . .' " Teilhard comments, "Surely it should be to the Church's interest to make use of my acknowledged reputation, even if it's not justified?" LT (undated, but apparently towards the end of 1934), p. 159.--See the wide range of specialized books which Teilhard read between 1939-1945 as compiled by Cuénot, Teilhard, pp. 236-37. Also in MM, between 1915-1918, Teilhard mentions some 23 books, along with numerous articles. Yet Rideau, Guide, p. 26, is critical of the quantity and sometimes the quality of Teilhard's reading.

[12] Some typical Teilhardian words: amorization, centration, Christogenesis (and many other genesis compounds), personalization. The various Teilhardian vocabularies, such as C. Cuénot, Lexique Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Seuil, 1963), a revised version entitled Nouveau Lexique Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Seuil, 1968), H. Cuypers,

The more basic difficulty in reading Teilhard has its source in the fact that he is trying to express new areas, previously unexplored by men. He wants to talk about the whole of reality, not only one part; he wants to explain the world not just from the outside, but from within. Like a teacher trying to describe to his blind student the greenness of the grass and trees, Teilhard tries to make us catch a glimpse of a world which our eyes have not seen. For him, it is often a stammering struggle. But a struggle such as this necessarily requires effort both on the part of the teacher and on the part of the student.

In order that his thought might be expressed as clearly and concretely as possible, Teilhard always works out from phenomena--the immediate, sensible phenomena of our earth with which science works and the psychological phenomena of fear, hope, faith, and love which are equally immediate for religion and the social sciences of man.

Vocabulaire Teilhard (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1963), E. Rideau, Guide, "Appendix," pp. 257-73, H. de Lubac, Teilhard Explained (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), Appendix II, pp. 83-89, include not only his neologisms, which are not numerous, but also scientific or technical words, sometimes along with terms whose ordinary meaning Teilhard has expanded or broadened.

[13] The almost total inability to understand Teilhard in his own terminology is particularly found among those men who transfer all words and explanations into their own pre-conceived (usually scholastic) systems. For example, see G. Frenaud, Pensée, or Philippe de la Trinité, O.C.D., Rome et Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1964).

He uses the data of paleontology and biology, history and physics, psychology, religion, and revelation. He observes, draws conclusions, extrapolates, questions. From science he derives his criterion for truth. According to Teilhard, after a certain period of observation of the phenomena under study, one proposes a hypothesis against which now the data is tested to see if everything presented can be accounted for and a greater coherence and understanding of the whole area results.[14] This more adequate understanding and better coherence suggest that we have drawn a little closer to the truth in our research.[15] This is, then, the phenomenal method of Teilhard de Chardin.

The Place of God

Teilhard had no intention of hiding his Christian belief in God and Jesus Christ. But a great number of his religious writings, and even some more scientific ones such as The Phenomenon of Man, are presented in the form of an apologetic. God is not brought in at the beginning, but only as an additional postscript or as an "other" phenomenon which coheres with and brings to fulfillment the results already obtained from a non-theistic process. Since our purpose is not to test his apologetic, it seems better to show God's place in the Teilhardian universe at each step of the way. For the religious life of man develops in a world which is permeated with God's presence.

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[14] In an early essay, Teilhard proposed, "the conclusive force of a system lies much more in its capacity to explain (that is to say, to give unity to) the intelligible Real than in the proofs that can be given of its parts in isolation and, still more, of its fundamental basis--which latter is a postulate." See WTW, "Creative Union," 1917, p. 153 (F 175). Much later, he expresses the idea in the following way: "The essential criterion and specific mark of truth is the ability to develop itself indefinitely, not only without developing any internal contradiction, but also by forming a positively constructed whole, whose parts support and complement one another with continually fuller reciprocity." "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., p. 1.

[15] WTW, "Creative Union," 1917, p. 153 (F 176). For other passages in which Teilhard clearly states truth is based on coherence, see HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, p. 71 and p. 110; HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, p. 118; FM, "Turmoil or Genesis?," 1947, p. 214 (F 275). See P. Chauchard, Man and Cosmos (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), esp. Ch. I, pp. 22-46.

His Creed

One of the most convenient summaries of Teilhard's vision is expressed in the following creed written in 1934:

> I believe that the Universe is an Evolution.
> I believe that Evolution is going towards Spirit.
> I believe that Spirit in Man is developed in the Personal.
> I believe that the supreme personal is the Christ-Universal.[16]

Every statement in this creed marks a greater clarity in his thought. In this presentation, they are interlocked, moving from the more general to the more specific. The movement represents a "coiling" process, as in the makeup of a cone. Teilhard often uses the cone as a geometric figure which can picture the movement of his thought or the movement of evolution.[17] Starting from the bottom circumference of the cone, its circles become more tightly compressed until they form a topmost peak or point. In a similar image, Teilhard uses the world globe with its meridians converging at either pole.[18] The image can represent the way that all the branches of man's knowledge are distinct and yet they all converge upon the one same pole of truth. He also describes by this image the movement of evolution outward from the simplest forms, increasing in numbers and varieties until the appearance of man. After man had reached his globe-encircling habitation of the earth, a convergence movement began so that mankind becomes more and more unified and centered as it moves to its final destiny. The geometric forms which Teilhard calls upon are meant as a "help." We must still grapple with the thought that the image tries to embody.

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[16] "Comment je crois," 1934, ms., p. 1.

[17] We find examples of this cone-figure applied to evolution in "Quelques vues générales sur l'essence de Christianisme," 1939, ms.; applied to time in SC, "Super-Humanity, Super-Christ, Super-Charity,"

The Universe is an Evolution

Evolution is a primary notion in the world of Teilhard. The idea of evolution was familiar to him from his scientific knowledge of the Darwinian theory.[19] But probably equally as influential was the philoso-

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1943; applied to charity in FM, "The New Spirit," 1942; applied to Christian perfection in "Note sur la notion de perfection Chrétienne," 1942, ms. Also see M. Périgord, Évolution et temporalité chez Teilhard (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1963), Ch. 1.

[18] An example of the sphere-image is found in "Comment je vois," 1948, ms. See R. Wayne Kraft, The Relevance of Teilhard (Notre Dame: Fides, 1968), p. 87.

[19] References to Darwin are found rather liberally sprinkled throughout Teilhard's more scientific works, e.g., PM, FM, AE, AM, VP.

phical inspiration of Bergson's L'évolution créatrice.[20] Still of wider import than either of these two men and their works was the growing awareness of the historical perspective which had its major impetus as far back as the Renaissance era.[21] The re-discovery of history emphasized the time element in men's lives. The Renaissance also saw the awakening of modern science, which through Galileo ruptured the ancient geocentric view, with the result that the full elasticity of space was detected for the first time. Somewhat later, after the walls of space had been broken, according to Teilhard, "it was the floor (and consequently the ceiling) of time" that now took on scientific importance as "duration."[22] Gradually through a space-time emphasis, the whole approach to our world has been affected, so that Teilhard can say that

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[20] Teilhard is his own best witness to the influence of Bergson. See "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., pp. 8-11. The most frequent references to the philosopher Bergson are found in the collection of letters written to his cousin during the first World War, MM, Aug. 5-6, 1915, p. 62 (F 76); Mar. 27, 1916, p. 96 (F 121); June 19, 1916, p. 103 (F 130); July 10, 1916, p. 111 (F 141); Jan. 16, 1917, p. 170 (F 220). There is a masterful study of the relation between Teilhard and Bergson in M. Barthélemy-Madaule, Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Seuil, 1963).

[21] See PM, Ch. 3, "The Modern Earth," pp. 235ff. (H 212ff; F 236ff). Also M. Périgord, Évolution et temporalité.

[22] PM, p. 239 (H 216; F 240-41); also cf. SC, "Some Reflexions on the Conversion of the World," 1936, p. 119 (F 158); FM, "The Grand Option," 1937, pp. 58-60 (F 79-81); FM, "The New Spirit," 1942, pp. 82-96 (F 109-126). As G. Crespy, From Science to Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 42, notes, Teilhard's insight is that "time is the vector along which a world organizes itself."

"nothing can be understood except by its history."[23]

Things which before had only been studied for what they are took on also an importance of what they had been as well as what they will be.[24] The static or fixed world was gone; in its place was one of movement and change. This discovery of inevitable change frightened many. For the believer, it was a question of reconciling this data with the Genesis account of creation and a God-who-makes-all-things-as-they-are.[25] For every man, there is the question of where is the movement going, what does this process of change lead to. Does evolution have a direction that we can find?[26]

In terms of measurement, science has found a direction in the process of change. Ultimately there is a breakdown in matter and a dissipation of energies. Entropy is the technical word that is applied to this phenomenon.[27] Although entropy is taking its toll right now, its true debilitating effect is in terms of millions and perhaps billions of years. Yet even in these terms, entropy does seem to deprive the universe, life, and all our efforts of real value. For Teilhard who believed that God created the world and saw that it was good and that all creation groans until Christ comes again, entropy was not a satisfactory answer to the question of change.

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[23] FM, "A Note on Progress," 1920, p. 12 (F 25). As a more general view of this intellectual milieu, see W. H. van de Pol, The End of Conventional Christianity (New York: Newman Press, 1968); also Rideau, Guide, Ch. 3 "A Phenomenology of History," pp. 51ff.

[24] FM, "Faith in Man," 1947, p. 186 (F 236).

[25] AM, "Fossil Man," 1921, p. 32 (F 49-50).

[26] The problem involved in the direction of evolution is attacked in HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, esp. pp. 69-71; for a somewhat similar presentation, see FM, "The Grand Option," 1939, pp. 41-42 (F 61-63).

[27] In VP, "The Movements of Life," 1928, p. 149 (F 209), Teilhard explains: "Entropy is the name that physics gives to that apparently inevitable fall by which collections of corpuscles (the seat of all physico-

Movement or change in itself was not a problem with regard to the belief in a creative God. As Teilhard is careful to explain, God is not some intruder stuck into the world by a pious believer, but God is at the very heart of reality, bringing it all to birth.[28] In an evolving universe, God becomes all the more essential, all the more immanent, and at the same time all the more transcendent to his creation. Teilhard considered the Creator in the case of a static world model as structurally detached from his work and consequently God had no definable basis to his immanence. On the other hand, in the case of a world which is evolving, "God can then be conceived (both structurally and dynamically) only in so far as (like some sort of 'formal' cause) he coincides, though without

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chemical phenomenon) slide, by virtue of statistical laws of probability, towards an intermediate stage of diffuse agitation, a state in which all exchange of useful energy ceases on our scale of experience." Also see PM, p. 56 (H 51; F 46); VP, "The Phenomenon of Man," 1930, p. 167 (F 235).

[28] AM, "The Singularities of the Human Species," 1954, p. 270 (F 369); VP, "The Transformist Question," 1921, p. 25 (F 39).

being confused with, the center of the convergence of cosmogenesis."[29] In a universe that is in evolution, everything is rising up towards an evolutive God as towards a center of immanence, but from this God everything descends too, as though from a center of transcendence.[30] Teilhard insists on the primordial transcendence of this new evolutive God in order that he may serve the world as a consummation lying ahead of it, that he may exist outside all series of causes, and that while being the center of centers, he may find his own consistence in himself.[31] Teilhard frequently bases the transcendence of God on the necessity for God's consistency in himself or a personality belonging to itself. Even though his most developed proofs for the existence of God stem from finality argumentation, he still retains the essential idea of a "prime mover" as is shown in his term "evolutive" (that is, one who makes evolve . . .) God, which is simply the affirmation of God as creator.[32]

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[29] "Le Dieu de l'évolution," 1953, ms., p. 3. This essay has recently been printed in Cahier, VI, 14.

[30] HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, p. 88.

[31] AE, "Du cosmos à la cosmogénèse," 1951, p. 271; also see HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, pp. 85-86. A good analysis of the God-world relationship is found in N. M. Wildiers, "La religion universelle," Cahier, V, 118-19.

[32] In PM, p. 338 (H 308; F 344), Teilhard writes: ". . . the universal center of unification (precisely to fulfill its motive /more accurately translated as "moving"/, collective /more accurately translated as "gathering" or "joining"/, and stabilizing function) must be considered as pre-existing and transcendent."

Teilhard made some attempt to explain better the creation of a world by a metaphysics of union.[33] While his dictum, "to create is to unite," does open up some new possibilities over a static metaphysics of being, Teilhard himself was never satisfied with positing positive nothingness as a pole opposite God as creator. In his terms, opposite pure Unity (a concept that is undoubtedly influenced by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity) lay a disparate multiplicity, which is the creatable world (a philosophical concept of positive non-being). Such a description seemed to imply a denial of the traditional "creation from nothing," although Teilhard thought that the two conceptions might be made compatible.[34]

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[33] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 44 (F 72): "Creative union is not exactly a metaphysical doctrine. It is rather a sort of empirical and pragmatic explanation of the universe conceived in my mind from the need to reconcile in a solidly coherent system scientific views on evolution (accepted as, in their essence, definitively established) with the innate urge that has impelled me look for the Divine not in a cleavage with the physical world but through matter, and, in some sort of way, in union with matter." Twenty-four years later, Teilhard does claim a little more directly the right to a "metaphysics"--"Comment je vois," 1948, ms., pp. 17-20.

[34] In WTW, "Creative Union," 1917, p. 163 (F 185), Teilhard clearly stated that "union does more than transform things and add to them. It produces." Robert North, S. J., Teilhard and the Creation of the Soul (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), pp. 88-89, points out that all the objections against creative union can be handled within the traditional scholastic terminology or rectified with its help. He also cites Tresmontant (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin - His Thought) for taking a different tack in asserting that Teilhard should be commended for performing a valuable service in clarifying and distinguishing the notions of creation and omnipotence, which are so often equated. Also see Letter to Auguste Valensin, Nov. 19, 1917, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 87.

For Teilhard himself as well as for us, creative union as a descriptive theory is fruitful in explaining at a deeper or more speculative level the actual evolutive process in which we are participating.[35] For us, as we shall see, "to be more is to be more fully united with more. For the soul itself . . . to be more is more fully to unite more. For both, to receive or to communicate union is to undergo the creative influence of God . . . who creates by uniting."[36]

Regardless of our metaphysical system, a Creator-God should not be threatened by all the evolutionary evidence.[37] Evolution, properly understood, seems to make God all the closer and more active in our everyday world. The intimate relation between God and the world, according to Teilhard, is only a reflection of the necessity and the freedom of God in creating. When God through his active attraction draws all things to their fulfillment and union with him in Christ,

> Thus will be constituted the organic complex of God and world--the Pleroma--the mysterious reality of which we cannot say that it is more beautiful than God by himself (since God could dispense with

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[35] Smulders, Design, Appendix I, "A Metaphysic of Creation?" pp. 77-85, is far more skeptical of even the potential development of Teilhard's "metaphysic" than North, Creation.

[36] SC, "My Universe," 1924, pp. 45-46 (F 73-74).

[37] Smulders, Design, Ch. 3 "Creation and Evolution," p. 57, states quite plainly: "The doctrine of evolution certainly in no way undermines the dogma of creation. But it does oblige us to take a critical look at our own picture of the act of creation and perhaps revise that picture."

> the world) but which we cannot, either, consider completely gratuitous, completely subsidiary, without making Creation unintelligible, the Passion of Christ meaningless, and our effort completely useless.[38]

The reason for Teilhard's insistence on the combination of both necessity and freedom in the act of creating comes from his reading of scriptural texts, especially from St. Paul, which attach so much importance to the fulfillment or completion involved in the Pleroma.[39] According to Teilhard, our idea of creation must always take account of these two conditions gleaned from revelation: (1) God is entirely self-sufficient, and (2) nevertheless, the universe brings him something that is vitally necessary.[40]

The second problem about the direction of evolution demanded further reflection upon the phenomenon of change. As Teilhard saw it, evolution required no particular philosophy; it was a process, a dimension, a condition which every hypothesis or theory must recognize and account for.[41] This generalized movement, which is evolution, was captured in the Teilhardian use of genesis. Genesis means not only a "becoming," but it also includes the idea of a direction.[42] For example, the Greeks passed on to us their notion of a fixed and ordered world--a cosmos. From an evolutionary viewpoint, this legacy must be changed from a cosmos to a cosmogenesis--a world coming to greater order. Teilhard drew upon his knowledge of the biological and paleontological sciences, and the world evidenced an increasing growth of arrangement.[43] This "ordering" would seem to indicate a contrary evidence to that of entropy. Once we have left behind us the notion of a static world, there are only two possible directions for a world in genesis: a breaking down, which is recognized in entropy, and a building up, which is recognized in arrangement and more complex forms. From scientific evidence, then, it appears that evolution is rather the sum of two processes. The question remains whether we can say that one predominates over the other. The very sciences with which Teilhard was most familiar, as well as his Christian religion, influenced the direction he would take.

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[38] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 85 (F 114).

[39] The "cosmic" texts of St. Paul are: Romans 8:19-23; Colossians 1:15-20; Ephesians 1:9-10, 22-23. See the analysis of these texts in their relation to Teilhard in C. Mooney, Mystery, pp. 95-99.

[40] "Christianisme et évolution," 1945, ms., p. 4. Also "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., pp. 29-30. In SC, "Action and Activation," 1945, pp. 181-82 (F 228-29), Teilhard speaks of God as "completely other in nature than the world and yet unable to dispense with it." He footnotes a further explanation: "What I have in mind here is a synthetic re-definition of being, which, taken in its most general form, would include, both simultaneously, an absolute term and a participated term. What makes the God-world antinomy insoluble is that we first split up a natural pair and then persist in considering the two terms in succession." See also HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, pp. 86-89.

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[41] VP, "Evolution of the Idea of Evolution," 1950, pp. 245-46 (F 347-48); also PM, p. 241 (H 217-18; F 242).

[42] From the second letter written to T. V. Fleming, dated May 18, 1954, from "Two Unpublished Letters of Teilhard," Heythrop Journal, VI (Jan., 1965), n. 1, pp. 41-42. Cf. "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., pp. 8-11.

[43] "Le Christique," 1955, ms., pp. 2-4.

Research continues to turn up data which reinforces the scientific fact of a world evolving from very simple elements to an ever more complex being.[44] We find that with the increasing number of atoms and molecules joined together, there results a greater complexity in matter. Along with complexity, a centration in elements develops. Centration or centering is the result of arrangement, specification, and unification. Teilhard focuses upon this centration in the elements of matter. It is what he calls simply the "within."[45] Science has the tendency to study only the "without." In Teilhard's eyes, what is important now is to join the study of the "without" with a study of the "within."[46] From his own consideration of both areas, Teilhard formulates his law of a universe in evolution--the Law of Complexity/Consciousness.[47] First of all, the law includes the phenomenon of the movement in evolution from the simpler to the more complex. Then it also takes in the pattern of an increase in centration--the "within"--corresponding to the increase in complexity. From his Law of Complexity/Consciousness, Teilhard can move to a further step in his understanding of evolution. Not only is the universe in evolution, but it becomes apparent that the movement is one of matter going towards spirit.

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[44] Speaking about complexity, Teilhard explains: "I shall confine my use of the word to the meaning of combination, i. e. that particular higher form of grouping whose property it is to knit together upon themselves a certain fixed number--whether great or small matters little--of elements, with or without the secondary addition of aggregation or repetition--within a closed whole of determined radius: such as the atom, the molecule, the cell, the metazoon, etc." MPN, p. 20 (F 17).

[45] PM, p. 98 (H 89; F 91).

[46] This is a major theme of The Phenomenon of Man. In a less developed way, it can be found in an article entitled, "The Phenomenon of Man," 1928, included in SC, p. 96 (F 128). Also MPN, p. 121 (F 162-63), footnote 1.

[47] In AM, "The Phyletic Structure of the Human Group," 1951, p. 139 (F 195), Teilhard expressed his law in the following way: "Left long enough to itself, under the prolonged and universal play of chance, matter manifests the property of arranging itself in more and more complex groupings, and at the same time in ever-deepening layers of consciousness; this double and combined movement of physical unfolding

Evolution is Going Towards Spirit

The material elements of the world are driven by a natural force or energy to join together in ever larger complexes. An atom has a greater complexity than the nucleons of which it is constituted because an atom is a closed whole, containing a fixed number of elements and having properties unique to itself. In a similar way, molecules rank above atoms, viruses above molecules, living cells above viruses, and so on.[48] We should note, however, that complexity does not mean just the heaping up of elements. For example, a drop of water is not more complex than a single molecule of water. The idea of complexity,

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and psychic interiorization (or centration) once started, continuing, accelerating, and growing to its utmost extent." The most extended treatment of this law of evolution appears in the first two chapters of The Phenomenon of Man. For an extensive comment on the Teilhardian insight into the structure of the world, see Rideau, Guide, Ch. 4 "Cosmology."

[48] FM, "Turmoil or Genesis?" 1947, p. 217 (F 278), footnote 1. See P. Chauchard, Man and Cosmos, Ch. II, pp. 47-83.

Teilhard emphasizes, includes necessarily the notion of elements being "centrated" or "centered." The elements must take on a certain relationship, the one to the other, so that each maintains its distinctness while at the same time becoming more specialized in the harmonious functioning of the whole. Perhaps we could picture this basic concept in the form of a cell made up of various molecules, each distinct and yet taking on a new dimension of life-value by their function in the total unity of the cell. For true complexity, then, there must needs be centreity.

As soon as we speak of this "centering" process, we should realize that our focus is being turned to the "within" of things. To express this "within" of things, Teilhard frequently uses the word consciousness.[49] Perhaps this is the most troublesome word in the Teilhardian vocabulary. Once again we should recall that Teilhard always begins with phenomena that every man can see or touch or experience in some way.[50] But he also recognizes the great tendency in man to fix upon only those things which can be measured or weighed. Although often caricature, there is in all of us a bit of the materialistic doctor who denies the existence of a soul because he has not seen one on his operating table. Yet

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[49] In a context where Teilhard remarks that within, consciousness, and spontaneity are three expressions for the same thing, he footnotes the word consciousness: "taken in its widest sense to indicate every kind of psychism, from the most rudimentary forms of interior perception imaginable to the human phenomenon of reflective thought." PM, p. 62 (H 57; F 53); and PM, pp. 329-30 (H 300-301; F 334-35).

[50] VP, "The Transformist Question," 1921, pp. 22-23 (F 36-37).

Teilhard points out to us that the phenomena themselves provide evidence beyond what we can lay our hands on. We are well aware of our own thoughts, imaginations, and dreams, as well as the sensible interior of the dog and the life interior of the plant. Working from the principle that whatever is present in later elements has its rudimentary form in the very origins of beings, Teilhard suggests that we can presume a "within" for all centered elements from the evidence of our own "within."[51] It is to such a "within" that Teilhard tries to apply an expanded notion of consciousness.[52]

What happens when we apply a consciousness to proteins, atoms, molecules, and so on? Do we then have "thinking" proteins? Teilhard would patiently point out that we are trying to posit our experience of consciousness to these far less complex forms. The Law of Complexity/Consciousness, which he has formulated, states that the more complex is also the more conscious. Consequently the consciousness of the atom is in some similar proportion to our consciousness as the complexity of the atom is to our human body.[53] If the material complexity differs to a staggering degree, so too is the difference in consciousness. Yet these simple elements are centered in their complexity and consequently do have a "within."[54] To offset any misunderstanding, we have to remember that Teilhard uses complexity as a notion always including centreity. Rocks or any similar heaped-up aggregates do not have true complexity, and so we do not talk about a consciousness attributable to them.

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[51] PM, pp. 59-63 (H 54-58; F 50-54); also cf. PM, pp. 97-98 (H 88-89; F 90-91).

[52] Teilhard was well aware of the analogous use of words that he employed, especially when he applied such terms as consciousness, love, and even the word passion to the various levels of evolution. For a brief, but competent review of Teilhard's use of analogy, see H. de Lubac, L'éternel féminin, Ch. 4, pp. 102-37.

[53] FM, "The Planetization of Mankind," 1945, p. 130 (F 165); also see AE, "La centrologie," 1944, p. 106; P. Chauchard, Man and Cosmos, p. 80.

The evolutionary movement towards a greater complexity and thereby to a greater consciousness is not a straight-line development. The history of evolution indicates a continuous movement, but a movement which at times meets a dead end, at other times leaps forward to a wholly new level. Teilhard reasons to one basic energy which operates to provide this movement in the world, and this energy has its source in the "within" of elements.[55] In each particular element, we can distinguish two distinct components of this fundamental energy. The first kind of emergy is sometimes called tangential energy by Teilhard; it links an element with all others of its same order, "that is to say, of the same complexity and the same centricity."[56] It includes all the forms of energies familiar to us: kinetic, mechanical, chemical, electrical, nuclear. This kind of energy in all its forms is measurable, and has given to science the datum of entropy. To the second component or kind of energy Teilhard gives the name radial; it draws an element towards ever greater complexity and centricity--"in other words, forwards."[57] It is an energy that is spiritual, intangible, irreversible, and so scientifically immeasurable.[58] If we were to graph energy only in its tangential form, it would follow a rather straight-line, gradual downward slope; radial energy, on the other hand, would be plotted on a rising, though somewhat erratic, linear development.[59] The two kinds, however, must be taken together as forming a single movement. Although this energy of a world genesis is always active, its successful direction is not guaranteed. It is only by a fallible spontaneity for greater growth--what Teilhard labels groping--that we see a greater complexity/consciousness come forth.[60] For inherent in the interplay of the two energy components which Teilhard has described is the drive towards better or fuller being. In his worldview, if we can speak about a "natural law," this is its basis: the law which God has put into his creation is the spontaneous drive to evolve towards better or fuller being--a genesis with a forward and upward direction.[61]

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[54] PM, p. 66 (H 60; F 57).

[55] PM, pp. 67-72 (H 62-66; F 59-64).

[56] PM, p. 70 (H 65; F 62).

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[57] Ibid.

[58] For a defense of Teilhard's positing of a spiritual energy, see Rideau, Guide, pp. 84-88.

[59] In FM, "Turmoil or Genesis?" 1947, p. 217 (F 278), footnote 1, Teilhard uses the image of a twofold coiling: the coiling of the mass, "which subdivides Matter without organizing it (e.g. the stellar masses)" and the coiling of complexity, "which organizes elementary masses in ever more elaborate structures." The first corresponds to the tangential energy he has described, and the second to the radial. He cautions that "all Mass-Coilings certainly do not result in Coilings of Complexity; but on the other hand all Coilings of Complexity seem to originate or be conditional upon a Mass-Coiling--for example, Life, which could only be achieved on the physical foundation of a planet."

[60] Groping is called "the specific and invincible weapon of all expanding multitudes. This groping strangely combines the blind fantasy of large numbers with the precise orientation of a specific target. It would be a mistake to see it as mere chance. Groping is directed chance." PM, p. 121 (H 110; F 116).

From a scientific study of the phenomena, we know that progress in such a genesis is first concentrated in matter or in the "without." But after a certain degree of complexity has been reached, the true course of development is seen to lie in the forces of the "within"--consciousness. Evolution, whose path has been so carefully charted by scientists on the material level, takes on a totally new dimension if we consider it under the light, not of material complexity, but of the growth towards ever greater consciousness. Consciousness takes on the appearance of stepping beyond mere material development of a complex nervous system.[62]

Man takes his place on earth, and evolution on the material level seems to have reached a standstill. Evidence is available to point up that for the last two million years a number of material forms have disappeared but no new forms have developed on the earth except the hominids, the predecessors of modern man.[63] Within the hominid group, cerebration is the center of development. Finally consciousness reaches its highest level of progress by means of a "within" which not only knows, but knows that it knows.[64] Reflection--the ability of a subject to study and know itself as well as objects outside itself--marks this new threshold which creation has reached. Consciousness has developed such an independence of matter, that we can now see a little more clearly the direction of evolution. Evolution is moving towards spirit.[65]

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[61] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 32 (F 23).

[62] PM, p. 111 (H 146; F 158-59).

[63] MPN, p. 73 (F 93).

In an evolution moving towards spirit, the old problem of a dualistic philosophy, with its opposed elements of matter and spirit, finds a more adequate solution.[66] Teilhard's use of matter and spirit, and the correlative body and soul, is akin to a Biblical usage in which "body" refers to the whole man in his material aspects and "soul" or "spirit" refers to the whole man in his most human or spiritual aspects.[67]

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[64] "Man discovers that he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself, to borrow Julian Huxley's striking expression. . . . The consciousness of each of us is evolution looking at itself and reflecting upon itself." PM, pp. 243-44 (H 220; F 244-45).

[65] With the recognition of spirit as the phenomenon, Teilhard assures us that three properties are necessarily included: (1) irresistible, meaning infallible, i. e. nothing can stop the growth towards spirit; (2) irreversible, following upon irresistible; (3) totalizing, meaning so much matter, so much spirit, and spirit ultimately moving to a quantum of personality. HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, pp. 122-25.

[66] SC, "My Universe," 1924, pp. 51-53 (F 79-81); also DM, p. 81 (F 121-22).

[67] C. Mooney, Mystery, p. 73 makes a somewhat similar interpretation of Teilhard's use of body and spirit.

For Teilhard, matter is not opposed to spirit; on the contrary, it is the matrix of spirit.[68] "Spirit is not the fleshless thing, the insubstantial specter, that is sometimes presented to us. True spirit must be formed of all the vitality and all the consistency of the body. . . ."[69] In the direction of spirit we discover better or fuller life. Our efforts, then, should be concentrated on spirit. The study of matter, as essential as it may be for scientific research, must be recognized for what it is. It is the study of a "backwater," flowing away from the main current.[70] For evolution is going towards spirit. The problem now arises: can we determine the meaning of this phenomenon of spirit in our evolving universe?[71]

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[68] TF, July 19, 1949, p. 109. In VP, "Basis and foundations of the idea of evolution," 1926, p. 187, Teilhard proposes: "Everything becomes, if not spirit, at least a distant preparation for, 'matter' for, spirit." Teilhard also compares matter to the terminus a quo and spirit to the terminus ad quem of one and the same movement. AE, "La centrologie," 1944, p. 132. See also SC, "My Universe," 1924, pp. 49-53 (F 77-81).

[69] TF, Jan. 22, 1927, p. 56.

[70] Zanta, Jan. 24, 1929, p. 87 (F 97).

[71] That people should not even ask the question about the direction of consciousness dismayed Teilhard: "The clipping about Einstein's statement on God which you sent me gave me a real kick. I don't have the hundredth of the Einstein's mathematical brains. But I am dumbfounded that such a man should not realize that a single particle of consciousness present in the Universe makes it physically necessary that the Universe should become all conscient eventually, at the end of the transformation; and what finally is Consciousness, if not Personality?" TF, Oct. 18, 1940, p. 149.

Spirit in Man is Developed in the Personal[72]

We have found in evolution a shift of emphasis from matter to spirit.[73] With the increase in consciousness or the "within," there is also evidence of the increase in energy drives mirrored in higher and higher instinctual stages along with a greater spontaneous expression. When the leap to a reflective consciousness is made, there is a concomitant leap in spontaneous expression, to which we give the name freedom. According to Teilhard, this development in spirit is even more revolutionary than the first leap in evolution from pre-life to life.[74]

Similar to the term biosphere which describes the earth encircled with living creatures, the noosphere is Teilhard's word to describe the new earth encircled by creatures possessing reflective thought.[75] He also coins the word, hominization, to sum up on the one hand the result of the leap from the stage of instinct to that of thought.[76] On the other hand, hominization is applied by Teilhard to an on-going process--"the progressive phyletic spiritualization in human civilization of all the forces contained in the animal world."[77] Man not only stands out as the leading shoot of the evolutionary tree, but he has the ability to take conscious control over the further progress of evolution.[78] Instead of working from mere instinctual spontaneity, man has the freedom in accordance with his reflective nature to spiritualize (we could also say "humanize") the drives of the animal world from which he has evolved.[79] Teilhard sees this movement within man himself as the development of spirit in the personal.

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[72] The expression, "in Man," is an addition to the original statement written in the manuscript of 1936. In 1950, Teilhard noted that he would prefer to make explicit that the development of spirit about which he is talking refers to man. As a result, the manuscripts we now possess already incorporate this correction. See "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., p. 12, footnote 2.

[73] Cf. Paul-Émile Duroux, L'histoire naturelle de l'humanité selon Teilhard (Paris: Éditions universiaires, 1964).

[74] Teilhard describes reflective consciousness as "the passage (as though in a second birth) from simple life to 'life in the second power.' " "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., p. 17.

[75] MPN, p. 80 (F 106-107); PM, pp. 200-204 (H 180-83; F 199-203).

Because of the possible non-use or misuse of freedom, however, this development of the person is not automatically assured.[80] Man has the ability to reflect on and to choose the direction of the truly fuller and

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[76] PM, p. 182 (H 164; F 180). Hominization has become a commonly accepted technical term apart from reference to Teilhard's writings. For example, see Karl Rahner's Hominisation (London: Burns and Oates, 1965).

[77] PM, p. 200 (H 190; F 199). Teilhard reinforces this idea of development in MPN, p. 114 (F 153).

[78] "Contingence de l'univers et goût humain de survivre," 1953, ms., pp. 1-5; PM, p. 247 (H 223; F 248-49).

[79] See N. M. Wildiers, Introduction, p. 80.

[80] Cf. Rideau, Guide, p. 107, for his evaluation of Teilhard's analysis of the use of freedom.

and better life. But in no way can reflection and freedom be considered static possessions of man.[81]

> Where intelligence is concerned "to be posited" does not mean "to be achieved." As soon as a child is born it must breathe or it will die. Similarly the reflective psychic center, once turned in upon itself can only subsist by means of a double movement which is in reality one and the same. It centers itself further on itself by penetration into a new space, and at the same time it centers the rest of the world around itself by the establishment of an even more coherent and better organized perspective in the realities which surround it. We are not dealing with an immutably fixed focus but with a vortex which grows deeper as it sucks up the fluid at the heart of which it was born. The ego only persists by becoming ever more itself, in the measure in which it makes everything else itself. So man becomes a person in and through personalization.[82]

It is necessary to point out quickly a warning which Teilhard frequently gives. Individuality is not to be confused with personality.[83] Egoism focuses upon individuality. Man, the element, has a tendency to withdraw from others, separating himself off in order to develop his individuality. This is really to fall backward since it represents a breakdown into plurality. We must remember that the whole movement in evolution has been one of convergence--a movement in the direction of complexity and consciousness through union of elements. In discovering this pattern of evolutionary growth, we should be able to appreciate that for us men, too, spiritual advancement is to be found in convergence--towards the "other," not away from him.[84] What is of greater value is not the straitened notion of individuality. Our true worth lies in the development of our spirit in the personal. Following the law of evolution, our ego grows to greater or fuller being in inverse proportion to a falsely-apparent development of an egoistic individuality.[85] Person must be realized through union.

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[81] In criticizing Bergson, once during the first World War and again during the second, Teilhard holds that fullness of freedom will be attained only at the term in history of personalization. Cf. M. Barthélemy-Madaule, Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin, pp. 542-44.

[82] PM, p. 191 (H 172; F 190).

[83] HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, pp. 81-82.

Even through union we are not absolutely freed from a kind of dangerous egoism. Quite often in taking up the subject of marriage, Teilhard did not hesitate to call attention to an "egoism of two."[86] A most wonderful development of the person is shown in the ability to give oneself totally to another. Marriage is the discovery that in giving oneself totally in love one becomes ever more oneself or else the very gift of self disappears. And so marriage highlights one of Teilhard's favorite axioms that "union differentiates."[87] The more a person develops himself in order that the gift which he makes of himself to his spouse might be of greater value, the more perfect does the marriage become. If one partner tries to dominate or even absorb the other, the marriage is not a true union, for it is not an advance forward into personalization. Even marriage is seen to be evolving through human development, with its growth dependent upon the recognition of the equality of women and men and upon marriage as a union of love, not of mere material propagation. For Teilhard, to see marriage only in terms of reproduction is to look backwards in the direction of matter. While not denying the importance and even necessity of reproduction in marriage, Teilhard would have us look forward in the direction of spirit for its ultimate meaning and value. It is in the direction of spirit that the energy of love predominates.

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[84] PM, pp. 289-90 (H 262-63; F 292-93).

[85] SC, "Research, Work, and Worship," 1955, pp. 215-16 (F 284-85). Much earlier, Teilhard seems to be thinking along quite different lines: "I'm just wondering at the moment whether the 'individual' should not be looked on as an element of fixation or stabilization. In that case, movement, evolution, would be realized in a sort of surround, a sort of 'sheath,' enveloping and giving birth to individuals . . . the truth would lie in a synthesis of fixation and movement." MM, Aug. 4, 1915, p. 225 (F 292).

[86] Sur le Bonheur, "Trois discours de mariage," pp. 65-91, expressed Teilhard's idea of marriage in actual discourses given at the wedding-Mass. A fuller exposition can be found in two essays in HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, esp. pp. 91-96; HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, esp. p. 133.

Just as there can be the threat of a single egoism thriving even in marriage, so an expanded egoism of two people, united in love, can become equally as selfish and individualistic. Two lovers are saved from this separatism or dividing off from their fellowmen only by the acknowledged presence of a third party.[88] The ultimate identity of this third party is seen to be God, present in the very beginnings of this new threshold of personalization and also its ultimate goal. But the child, too, must be cherished as the natural development of a "third party" in marriage. Not as primary but just as necessary as God and children, all relationships that surround a married couple must benefit from their breakthrough of individual egoism. Unless the couple would sink back into an "egoism of two," they must share the fuller life which they have found through marriage, even beyond the confines of their own home. This obligation rests upon every marriage in order that human society may grow and properly develop.[89]

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[87] "Union differentiates" expresses an empirical law which according to Teilhard is confirmed by the whole of experience. See PM, p. 288 (H 262; F 291); HE, "L'esprit de la terre," 1931, p. 52; "Comment je crois," 1934, ms., p. 16, footnote 1.

[88] Sur le bonheur, "Trois discours de mariage," p. 90.

On the level of society, too, an egoism threatens us. A discrimination on the racial or national level is only a further expansion of an individual egoism. Nazi Germany represents a modern-day example of this society egoism. Any race or nation that would want to separate itself off from the total community of mankind demonstrates a breakdown into multiplicity. Again it is a backward movement towards a "material" splintering, whereas progress lies not in fixing upon races or nations but upon a convergence of persons.[90] The basic movement of evolutionary development--convergence or union--is violated. Such a convergence can come about only through a union based on spirit, for there will always be differences since union itself differentiates. Love alone, as an energy which brings together and unites, is the active source of this kind of union.[91]

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[89] "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., pp. 7-10.

[90] PM, pp. 262-63 (H 237-39; F 263-65).

For the development of the personal in man or in society, one proviso should be made clear. Union on any level of the individual or collective scale becomes a true union only if it is concerned with "centers."[92] The basic Law of Complexity/Consciousness pinpointed the necessity of centration for the real meaning of complexity and the development of consciousness. Within the evolution of spirit, we must recognize that this necessity of centration still holds true. Men can join together for various reasons, but true union results solely from individuals being joined in spirit, in the very core or heart of themselves--their "centers."[93] The difference is graphically represented when we consider a chain-gang of prisoners all joined in a common work-project, but only through a very obvious exterior bond, and a group of men who are fired with the same ideal to help others as we find exemplified in the founding of religious orders. It is this latter type of union--true union--that personalizes. Union personalizes because love is acknowledged as its basis.

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[91] Throughout his writings, Teilhard tries to express more clearly the meaning of love in an evolutionary context. The union-idea is well described in FM, "The New Spirit," 1942, pp. 91-92 (F 121): "To love is to discover and complete one's self in someone other than oneself, an act impossible of general realization on earth so long as each man can see in his neighbor no more than a closed fragment following its own course through the world. It is precisely this state of isolation that will end if we begin to discover in each other not merely the elements of one and the same thing, but of a single spirit in search of itself."

[92] "Trois choses que je vois," 1948, ms., pp. 1-7. Cf. HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, pp. 125-29.

[93] The three "times" of personalization are: (1) to center upon oneself; (2) to center upon the other; (3) to center upon the "greater" than oneself. Sur le bonheur, "Réflexions sur le bonheur," pp. 25-40. This essay also appears in Cahier, II, 58-64.

We can now give a name to the basic energy in the universe; it is love, ultimately identified with its source--God.[94] Love as a force in man includes the two modes of energy which we have seen previously: the tangential form, in so far as it spreads extensively and includes more and more people within its ambit, and the radial form in so far as it seeks an ever higher (and therefore more spiritual) expression.[95] Human love begins at a particularist and an extrinsic level, whether it be a love for a certain activity or for a certain person. But as we can see in the case of Christian mystics, love can become universalized, dynamic, and deepened, embracing everything as physically and literally lovable in God. In its radial form, it can become what Teilhard calls "super-charity."[96]

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[94] PM, pp. 290-94 (H 264-67; F 293-98).

[95] SC, "Super-Humanity, Super-Christ, Super-Charity," 1943, pp. 172-73 (F 216-18).

[96] Ibid., pp. 167-71 (F 212-16). Teilhard footnotes the use of super and indicates that it does not mean a difference of nature but a more advanced degree of realization or perception /p. 151 (F 193)/.

Although Teilhard can speak of love as the one cosmic force or energy permeating the universe because of the general unitive drift in evolution, he most often reserves the word love to that unitive movement when reflection is present.[97] Love, then, is the energy at the free use of man. From our study of evolutionary movement, we know the tendency of this force towards union of centers. The Christian message of love reinforces the idea of an all-inclusive love of men, one for another, "just as God has loved us"--center-to-center. Teilhard also finds the next evolutionary threshold to be crossed reflected in the Pauline doctrine of the Body of Christ.[98] Love alone is a force capable of so advancing mankind in the process of personalization that the very union among men provides the entry into a supreme personal center--the Christ-Universal.[99]

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[97] PM, p. 290 (H 264; F 293-94).

[98] Teilhard sees evolution as an aid to understanding Christian love: "The fundamental obstacle to Christian love is in effect numbers. . . . The Christian injunction to love your neighbor essentially presumes that men are not only brothers by common descent (which would still be insufficient in itself rightfully to subdue egoism and command love), but can in a real and physical manner recognize one another as members of a single passionately desired being . . . the preparation and foundation of a higher unity in Christo Jesu. From what direction will the first ray of light strike the intellect, and reveal to it, beneath the repulsive dust of humanity the outline of a single and unique reality, which it is possible to love? From the direction of evolution." VP, "Basis and Foundations of the Idea of Evolution," 1926, p. 139 (F 192-93). See C. Mooney, Mystery, pp. 71-86.

[99] TF, June 28, 1937, pp. 93-94.

The Supreme Personal is the Christ-Universal[100]

If the evolutionary movement has demonstrated the progression towards greater spiritualization and at the same time a growth of a personalistic universe, what is the ultimate term of this union of persons? From his Christian background, Teilhard finds the Pauline conception of the Body of Christ in perfect coherence with a scientific extrapolation of the evolutionary movement. For example, in The Phenomenon of Man, Teilhard projects a movement in mankind towards a point of convergence, which he calls the "Omega Point."[101] In order that this Omega Point may be a true center of convergence for human centers, it must possess certain qualities. These qualities he describes as supremely personal and therefore loving, irreversible and therefore immortal, existing before, above, and beyond the whole series of evolved beings and therefore transcendent.[102]

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[100] Teilhard was considering "super-ego" as a more easily understandable term than "supreme personal." But he reflects that "super-ego" connotes the "ghastly Freudian sense" so that "we need a new word." LT, Dec. 12, 1954, p. 299. Perhaps a more adequate alternative was the expression, "ultra-human." See TF, Jan. 25, 1950, pp. 110-11.

[101] PM, p. 283 (H 257; F 286); MPN, p. 121 (F 162); "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., pp. 10-14. According to H. de Lubac, Correspondence, Ch. 7, p. 113, footnote 13, the original meaning of Omega was Jesus Christ or the fullness of Christ. Omega, borrowed from the Apocalypse, was first of all a religious symbol and was expanded in meaning as Teilhard assimilated the writings of St. Paul. Only later did the scientific symbolism and phenomenological meaning become prevalent.

[102] HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, pp. 88-89. Teilhard states these qualities in a slightly variant pattern, e.g. reality, totalizing power, irreversibility in AM, "The Singularities of the Human Species," 1954, p. 271 (F 371-72); autonomy, actuality, irreversibility, and transcendence in PM, p. 297 (H 270-71; F 301).

But Teilhard recognizes that this kind of scientific extrapolation is far too weak to hold men true to their course of development.[103] Fortunately, as men of faith, we can appreciate the gift and necessary role of God's revelation of himself for man's total development.

While not seeking a concordism of revelation with scientific data, we do find, according to Teilhard, a coherence in the notion of a Christ, who is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and the projected Omega Point.[104] Jesus Christ is the Word spoken of by St. John in the Prologue of his Gospel, "in whom all things were created." Christ is the head of the Body, our completion and fulfillment, according to St. Paul, and the one for whom "all creation groans." This mysterious union, brought to maturity through the energy of love, seals Head and members into a Universal Christ. Teilhard gets so carried away at the idea of the Universal Christ, that he suggests it forms, in a true sense, a third nature--a cosmic nature--along with the previously recognized human and divine natures of the God-Man.[105]

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[103] The insufficiency of the Omega Point as an ideal to move men is not alluded to in PM, even in the "Epilogue." But this insufficiency is noted in SC, "Degrees of Scientific Certainty," 1946, pp. 194-96 (F 247-49). Teilhard somewhat expands this thought in "Un sommaire de ma perspective 'phénoménologique' du monde," 1954, Les études philosophiques, Oct.-Dec. 1955, n. 4, pp. 569-71.

[104] HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, pp. 110-13; "La parole attendue," 1940, Cahier, IV, 26-28; "Le Christique," 1955, ms., p. 7. As Teilhard clearly avowed in SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 56 (F 84), "in no case could the cosmos be conceived, and realized, without a supreme center of spiritual consistence. . . . On any hypothesis, if the world is to be thinkable it must be centered. The presence, therefore, at its head, of an omega has nothing to do with the fact of its 'supernatural elevation.' What gives the world its 'gratuitous' character is precisely that the position of universal center has not been given to any supreme intermediary between God and the universe, but has been occupied by the Divinity himself--who has thus introduced us 'in et cum Mundo' into the triune heart of his immanence."

Evolution has reached its definitive and irreversible term when men are joined in the supremely personal Christ-Universal. In Christ, we are made one, yet like every true union we never more truly possess our own persons than in their ultimate development.[106] For what is supremely personalizing for each of us is to take our place as members of the Body of Christ.

Personal Development: the Leitmotif

In rather broad strokes, then, this is the picture of the Teilhardian universe. He sees change, but change-with-direction, that is, genesis. The direction which has importance is towards spirit, and more particularly, the personal. The universe now "wears man's smudge and shares man's smell."[107] It is a universe which can best be understood with the human person as its recurring theme.[108] Man becomes necessary for a true interpretation of the movement of the past; man provides an understanding for a projection of the future which lies ahead. With the emphasis on man, the data of science coheres well with the revelation of God. After he has placed man in this general setting, what does Teilhard say about personal development here and now?

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[105] "Le Christique," 1955, ms., p. 8. For a good analysis of the Christ-Omega relationship, see Mooney, Mystery, pp. 87-103.

[106] FM, "Some Reflections on Progress," 1941, pp. 76-76 (F 99-100).

[107] Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Baltimore: Penquin, 1966), p. 27.

[108] D. von Hildebrand, Teilhard de Chardin: A False Prophet (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1968), pp. 11-19, contends that

He begins by observing that there is an obvious division in man's life between what he does and what happens to him.[109] We commonly value a man's life by what he does, what he accomplishes, how he succeeds. Our attention, therefore, is focused on his activities. In looking more closely at the whole phenomenon of a man's life, Teilhard calls our attention to a necessary consideration of the value of what happens to a man, what he suffers, how he apparently fails. For a man to develop his person, there is required a coherence between both these threads of a man's life.

First a man must try to develop himself actively. Effort and work are demanded. Man can never rest satisfied in what he has accomplished, but rather he must continue to press on. He gradually sees that his own betterment is intimately tied up with the betterment of his own world. Slowly his strivings are opened out beyond his own selfish ambitions. For every man who develops himself to a greater degree of personalization,

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Teilhard completely misses the nature of man as person. His firsthand knowledge of Teilhard's writings seems to be limited, however, since he depends on quotations cited by other critics.

[109] Briefly we are sketching here the structure of the first two parts of The Divine Milieu.

there is a corresponding growth in the whole of mankind.[110] In personalizing himself, he is personalizing the universe to some infinitesimal degree. As in the whole of evolution, this small movement looms large in the continued march towards the supreme personal, the Christ-Universal.[111]

Every form of growth requires a new beginning, with the past in some way left behind. For every choice made, other possibilities have been shunted aside. And so in his very activity, man is led to discover the pain of effort--something which happens to him and yet he willingly takes on himself. He realizes that in the particular choice of one thing, he has imposed a limit on himself in his potential development in other areas. All effort and every choice requires a detachment. Detachment as an attitude is a sort of bridge between the activities we take on and the passivities we accept. Detachment is not only the result of our own action, but it is also an action in itself. We have to break away--to detach ourselves--if we are to make any progress at all. All effort, work, and choice demands a detachment from what is at present or what can be in order to progress to what will be.[112]

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[110] DM, pp. 29-30 (F 47-48).

[111] See FM, "A Note on Progress," 1920, p. 22 (F 34) for the importance of every human "cell" to perform its task in order that the Parousia be physically possible.

[112] Teilhard describes man's reflective ability and its two powerful properties of the perception of the possible and the perception of the future in Sur le bonheur, "Réflexions sur le bonheur," pp. 9-13. Also in Cahier, II, 53-54.

At times, however, the choice or effort is not so personally made. Most of us have learned to accept so much of our lives that we fail to appreciate the great extent of passivity which is present. For example, we are passive in the face of the time when we are born, our environment in which we live, our own parents and family, our natural abilities and talents. Our passivity becomes more glaringly apparent to us when we find ourselves stricken with a disease, beset by psychological difficulties, and ultimately afflicted by an inevitable death. It is in the combination and coherence of these two parts of a man's life that Teilhard sees the real personalizing process.

Usually Teilhard de Chardin is looked upon as the apostle of the worldly activist. Yet he himself stressed more the importance of that side of man's life which we so like to ignore--his passivities. The correct use of this "more-than-half" of man's life becomes a measure of true personal development and thereby his holiness. Like the evolutionary world in which he lives, man too must be centered; and centering requires the total coherence of the parts of his life. Such a union marks true development and the possibility of grasping a totally new level of personalization in union with Christ.[113]

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[113] Such was the persistent theme of his first essays, beginning with "Cosmic Life," 1916, and the others that follow in WTW.

CHAPTER II

GROWTH THROUGH DETACHMENT

> "He who descended is he who also
> ascended . . . that he might fill all
> things." Ephesians 4:10.

"First, develop yourself, Christianity says to the Christian." This first phase of Christian perfection, Teilhard complains, seldom receives emphasis and then only a limited explanation. We seem to talk only on the supernatural level of prayer and the virtues. Perhaps the reason for our lack of sensitivity to this first stage was due to the fact that it seemed so obvious or so purely natural and merely human. With a certain restricted view of the "supernatural," we have a tendency either to separate it off completely from the human or at the other extreme to identify and absorb it totally into our own energies and powers.[1] Teilhard's drive towards coherence of the natural and the supernatural stirred his attempt to thread his way between the two extremes.[2]

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[1] For a historical perspective of the natural-supernatural confrontation, see the study by Teilhard's close friend, Henri de Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

[2] Teilhard responding to Blondel, Correspondence, pp. 48-49, wrote: "It is vitally important that the sanctifying process be disassociated from

In his evolutionary world picture, Teilhard has pointed out the movement from matter to spirit, spirit to the personal, and the personal to the supreme personal. It is a movement that is forward and upward. Just as progress lay in the direction of complexity, so union on the personal level signifies development. Isolation and egoism indicate a fall backwards into multiplicity. To grasp at matter when the whole direction of growth lies forward in the personal marks again a false progress. For matter is only the matrix of spirit.[3] Contrary to a presumption of a pre-evolutionary view, nature is not so determined that all development runs a fixed course. Man himself is still a part of the evolutionary process with his growth towards greater personalization. He, too, follows the law of nature which can be capsulized as "the passion for greater or fuller being."

The Role of Jesus Christ

From anthropological findings we know that man has advanced quite a distance from his early stages of cave-life to our present-day modern

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anything which might lend it an air of naturalism, humanism, or Christian Emersonianism. . . . I am hopeful of finding a definition of this transformation which divinizes our being, a definition which would 'contradistinguish' this form of transformation, through its very mode of operation, from all others and from all breaks in the natural order (such as those separating matter and life, life and thought). But I wonder whether the very structure of the world does not militate against this attempt."

[3] HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, pp. 71-74 is an attempt to describe this movement of matter becoming spirit.

apartment-dwellers. And yet from comparison with other branches of the evolutionary tree, man even now is still in the infancy of his development.[4] If we consider man in his present recognizable form as perhaps some fifty thousand years old, we would have to project the ordinary life cycle for his species in terms more like fifty million years. Such a perspective does have an effect upon our way of looking at Christianity. Before scientific data disrupted the fundamentalist reading of the Bible, we could picture Jesus Christ as coming down to our earth about midway in mankind's life cycle. Now our view is changed so that we consider Christ as being born into the human race in its relatively early infancy.

Even if we narrow our scope to human recorded history, Teilhard was concerned that even here we do not look upon this time as devoid of Christ. "The prodigious expanses of time which preceded the first Christians were not empty of Christ; they were imbued with the influx of his power."[5] It was Christ who stirred up the world in the labors of primitive man, in the beauty of Egypt, in the expectation of Israel, in oriential mysticism, and in Greek wisdom.[6] Upon his advent, being perfect man and God, Jesus Christ established a definite pattern and goal of life for man which would lead to the greatest personalization.[7] More important, in Teilhard's eyes, than trying to fix on the actual historical life of Jesus was to recognize the risen and now-living Christ who is the "first-born of all creation . . . before all things and in him all things hold together."[8] This was the Christ who would draw all things to himself once he had been raised up. As a result, in the writings of Teilhard, Christ is not emphasized as an exemplar for our own lives so much as the goal or "uniter"-the one in whom we are all joined.[9]

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[4] See Andrew G. van Melsen, Evolution and Philosophy (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1965), p. 203. For a clear description of human evolution, see C. Loring Brace, The Steps of Human Evolution (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1967). For further background, two books on the evolutionary perspective by recognized authorities are: George Gaylord Simpson, This View of Life (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1964) and Theodosius Dobzhansky, The Biology of Ultimate Concern (New York: The New American Library, 1967).

[5] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 61 (F 90).

Through his Incarnation, the Son entered not only into mankind but also into the universe which bears humanity. Jesus Christ is more than an element of the world; he possesses the dignity and function of a directive principle and also a center "upon which every form of love and every affinity converge."[10] In Teilhard's cosmic view of an evolution of matter going towards spirit, Christ cannot confine his Body just to the "within" of elements in the universe.[11] Although Teilhard grants that Christ came primarily and, in fact, exclusively for souls, he proposes that Jesus could bring them together and give them life "only by assuming and animating, with them, all the rest of the world."[12] Even if we consider the Mystical Body of Christ to be already mysterious and vast, it does not exhaust the true wonder of the extensions of Christ's cosmic Body.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] WTW, "The Priest," 1918, pp. 211-12 (F 291-92). Teilhard was insistent that the cosmic vision of Christ was always inseparably bound to the historical life of Jesus Christ, born of a Virgin and now risen. For example, see "Introduction à la vie chrétienne," 1944, ms., pp. 5-6.

[8] Epistle to the Colossians 1:15-17. Oxford translation. Cf. TF, Oct. 30, 1926, p. 48.

[9] Teilhard wrote to Blondel that "Christ solidifies totaliter, etiam naturaliter--because solidification of the individual is only realized within the solidification of the whole--and the whole holds together, top to bottom, solely through the final cohesion--and there is but one center--ω, Our Lord Jesus Christ.--Of course, this solidification of everything in Christo is still in fieri, still forthcoming." Correspondence, n. 2, 1919, pp. 49-50.

> The Incarnation is a making new, a restoration, of all the universe's forces and powers; Christ is the Instrument, the Center, the End, of the whole of animate and material creation; through Him, everything is created, sanctified, vivified. This is the constant and general teaching of St. John and St. Paul (the most 'cosmic' of sacred writers),

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[10] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 57 (F 47).

[11] Concerning the "without" in regard to Christ, Teilhard writes: "Who can fail to perceive the great symbolic gesture of baptism in the general history of mankind? Christ immerses himself in the waters of Jordan, symbol of the forces of this earth. These he sanctifies. And as he emerges, in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, with the water which runs off his body he elevates the whole world." DM, p. 86 (F 128).

[12] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 57 (F 47). Teilhard wrote to Auguste Valensin, Jan. 10, 1920: "It would be impossible to understand a Christ organically central in the supernatural universe, and in physical juxtaposition to the natural universe." Cited in Correspondence, Ch. 4, p. 91, footnote 33.

> and it has passed into the most solemn formulas of the Liturgy.[13]

What reinforces this vision of Jesus Christ is the concentration of Teilhard on the writings of St. John and St. Paul. St. John emphasizes faith, vision, sight--themes constantly occurring in Teilhard--along with the theme of love as the one ultimate energy.[14] St. Paul, of course, supplies the image of the Body of Christ, and inspires Teilhard with his emphasis on Christ risen and now in power rather than on the historical life of the past.[15] Reading both St. Paul and St. John caused Teilhard to cast his eyes forward and upward. The resulting cosmic role of Christ influenced Teilhard's [illegible] nature of grace.

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[13] Ibid., p. 58 (F 48).

[14] For a comprehensive and contemporary sweep of themes in the writings of St. John, see Bruce Vawter, C.M., "Johannine Theology," pp. 828-39, in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, edited by Raymond Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968).

[15] MM, Feb. 2, 1916, p. 93 (F 117). For an overall view of Pauline themes, see Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., "Pauline Theology," pp. 800-827, in The Jerome Biblical Commentary.

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The Role of Grace

Teilhard does not delve into the meaning of grace at any great length. He stated bluntly that it was far more important for theologians to reconcile practically the natural and supernatural into a unique and harmonious orientation of human activity than to concern themselves with the theoretical essence of grace.[16] At the same time, he was critical of the excessive emphasis in theology on logical, moral, and juridical relationships between God and man.[17] Although the analogies of family or domestic relations between God and man (such as Christ himself used) are simpler and safer than the more juridical kind, Teilhard was still concerned that for a more complete picture of the truth we should use analogies drawn from realities which are specifically natural and physical.[18] The friendship of God and adoption by God express traditional grace relationships which include an "adaptation of the universe, a transformation, a recasting, that are organic and cannot be canceled," because the central dignity of Christ is seen to be a vast all-embracing reality.[19]

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[13] Ibid., p. 58 (F 48).

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[15] MM, Feb. 2, 1916, p. 93 (F 117). For an overall view of Pauline themes, see Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., "Pauline Theology," pp. 800-827, in The Jerome Biblical Commentary.

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[16] Ecrits, "Note pour servir à l'évangélisation des temps nouveaux," 1919, p. 379. E. Baltasar, Teilhard and the Supernatural (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) is an attempt to reconcile the natural and the supernatural, inspired by the Teilhardian vision.

[17] SC, "Note on the Universal Christ," 1920, p. 19 (F 43).

[18] Ibid. Teilhard noted that the Catholic theology manuals on grace common to his time had devoted far too much attention to the grace-free will controversy: "In the theological analysis of grace, we are primarily concerned with overcoming an apparent opposition between human action and the power of God--a theoretical opposition, belonging to the order of social relations. We do not try to bring God to light in the world of experience, or positively to divinize something that is within us." WTW, "The Soul of the World," 1918, p. 190 (F 231); see also Paris, Feb. 5, 1913, p. 57 (F 357).

[19] SC, "Note on the Universal Christ," 1920, p. 19 (F 43-44).

Teilhard wanted to emphasize an understanding of grace, which did not usher man into another universe but rather guided him into a prolongation of our present universe.[20] Because of grace nothing of what we are remains the same; yet every element is utilized and passes through something of itself (like a "resurrection of the flesh" according to Teilhard).[21] While maintaining its present form and natural appearance, everything is already animated by the divine. Grace is sometimes recognized as a "call" towards a common center of beatitude.[22] Grace, which introduces man into the field of divine attraction, is more than the common environment or overall current "by which the multitude is bound together into the coherence of one solid whole or one single impulse."[23] For the man of faith, Teilhard points out, grace literally represents the common soul which brings man under the infinitely benign domination of a conscious mind.[24]

In his theory of creative union, he had proposed that "every higher soul differentiates more fully the elements it unites."[25] Christ, as the beginning and the end of all creation, acts upon us as such a soul. He does not destroy or wipe out our personality, but "on the contrary, by melting us into himself, he completes our differentiation as individual persons."[26] The very fact that we remain different and even grown more fully to be ourselves in this life of grace is a sign of the superior (not inferior) influence which the life of Christ exerts.[27]

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[20] Correspondence, n. 2, 1919, p. 50.

[21] Ibid.

[22] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 48 (F 38); see also Sur le bonheur, "Trois Discours de mariage," p. 74.

[23] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 49 (F 39).

[24] Ibid.

[25] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 46 (F 74).

Teilhard complains that theologians, enslaved to their philosophical categories, make grace into something infra-substantial or what they term "an accident."[28] Accident in this case means only "that which does not change the human essence of the soul."[29] Accident has a negative rather than a positive significance. Teilhard shrinks back from such a scholastic "nominalism" since it would appear that grace and pain or pleasure are in the same category because all three have some effect on the soul. Whereas pain or pleasure affect the soul as an infra-substantial accident, Teilhard distinguishes grace as being supra-substantial.[30] Rather than the static categories of substance and accident, Teilhard prefers to speak of incomplete substances, hierarchically ordered, as the foundation of the world; in consequence, he proposes that grace is no less intimate to ourselves, no less substantial, than humanity.[31] In fact, it is even more so. "By Baptism in cosmic matter and the sacramental water we are more Christ than we are ourselves--and it is precisely in virtue of this predominance in us of Christ that we can hope one day to be fully ourselves."[32]

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[26] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 266 (F 351).

[27] Ibid.

[28] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 58 (F 86). For some idea of the type of manural theology about grace with which Teilhard was dissatisfied, see H. Rondet, The Theology of Grace (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1967); Charles R. Meyer, "The Status of Grace Today," Chicago Studies, 7 (1968), 27-51; Piet Fransen, S.J., Intelligent Theology, 1 (London: DLT, 1967), Ch. 4, 91-97.

[29] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 265 (F 350).

[30] Ibid.

Union with God, which is implied by grace, is much more than a simple juridic justification, bound to an extrinsic increase of divine favor.[33] From the viewpoint of a Christian realism, grace represents in the language of Teilhard a "physical sur-creation."[34] Following upon our own free choice in giving ourselves over to a life of grace--that is, a life of union with Christ--everything of our person passes over into the supernatural.[35] It is not a question of only our inmost heart, but the total person with all the shadings and details from the past. Grace consumes the whole person, but that consummation is in the form of a transfiguration, utilizing all the elements in nature without destroying or annihilating them.[36]

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[31] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 58 (F 86). The French editor notes that Teilhard is in agreement with St. Thomas on the inadequacy of the term accident. Although St. Thomas says that grace is a quality, an accident, of the soul, "at the same time he speaks of it (and it would seem, by preference) as a new nature which allows man to participate 'according to a certain likeness, in the divine nature, by a sort of generation or new creation.' " ST I II, q. 110, art. 4.

[32] Ibid.

[33] "Introduction a la vie chrétienne," 1944, ms. p. 2.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Correspondence, n. 2, 1919, p. 47-48.

At the same time that grace is integrated into unity with nature--informing and transfiguring our everyday world--it is a free gift, which Teilhard compares to life itself.[37] In another image of grace pictured as a light, Teilhard explains that we cannot force the beam to fall on us or to continue to hold its ray on us.[38] Still we can ask for the light and be certain that it will not leave us, because of God's love. In fact, God is always on the alert to excite by his grace our first look for him and our first prayer.[39] Recalling the scriptural text that "no one comes to me, unless my Father draws him," Teilhard emphasizes that what is most divine in God is that "we are nothing apart from him."[40] And so he warns men at the very beginning of The Divine Milieu that to think our efforts, our activities--apart from grace--have real meaning and value is to fall back into the Pelagian heresy of human self-sufficiency.[41] It is to focus on man as an isolated individual, divorced from the whole context of his personalistic universe.

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[36] Ibid. Teilhard frequently interchanges the terms transfiguration and transformation. In DM, p. 86 (F 129), he observes: "It is astonishing that so few minds should succeed, in this as in other cases, in grasping the notion of transformation. Sometimes the thing transformed seems to them to be the old thing unchanged; at other times they see in it only the entirely new. In the first case it is the spirit that eludes them; in the second case, it is the matter. Though not so crude as the first excess, the second is shown by experience to be no less destructive of the equilibrium of mankind."

[37] DM, p. 111 (F 163).

[38] MM, June 17, 1917, p. 197 (F 256).

[39] DM, p. 111 (F 163).

[40] DM, p. 17 (F 29); see also MM, Mar. 31, 1917, p. 192 (F 249).

What we are observing with Teilhard is the phenomenon of man--actual, concrete, and supernaturalized. On this phenomenal level, there can be no call for invoking or demarcating the action of grace. For we do not find ourselves in a double world with areas of natural and supernatural life and divine and human operations.[42] The Christian universe is at once a new world, with God becoming one of its very elements, and a world made straight in its original Omega-development, now specified by its orientation to the Universal Christ.[43] Since Christ is Omega,

> he does not restrict his organizing activity simply to one zone of our being--that of sacramental relationships and the "habitus" of virtues. His directing and informing influence runs through the whole range of human works, of material determinisms and cosmic evolutions. By convention, we call these lower processes in the

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[41] Ibid.

[42] "Note sur la notion de perfection chrétienne," 1942, ms., pp. 2-3.

[43] Teilhard was well aware of the difficulty of not making the supernatural a necessity for the natural: ". . . through Christ, the bundle of all created matter that was in danger of falling back and disintegrating is re-formed in a higher, terminal unity balancing the lower, radical unity drawn from incorporation in one and the same matter . . . one would have to avoid the classic snag of giving the impression that nature can demand super-nature." MM, Jan. 1, 1917, p. 161 (F 207).

> universe "natural." In reality, by virtue of Christ's establishment as head of the cosmos, they are steeped in final purpose, in supernatural life, even to what is most palpable in their reality.[44]

Following out the image of the vine and the branches from St. John and the Body of Christ from St. Paul, Teilhard compares grace to the unique sap which flows from the trunk to the branches, the blood that courses through the veins under the impulse of one Heart, and the nervous current that is issued to all parts of the Body from the same Head.[45] Activity, animated by grace, becomes as effective and creative as life itself in an evolutionary universe, and so it builds up a Body in the true sense of the word.[46] Grace, which unifies this physically organized whole that is the Body of Christ, forces all men to exert an influence upon one another. It is in this relation of inter-dependence--the same kind which links together material systems--that Teilhard sees the "so astonishingly 'cosmic' mystery (we might almost say the phenomenon) of the Communion of Saints."[47]

The Role of Saints

Teilhard is convinced that we learn more about the action of grace in our world from the concrete lives of saints than we can from any speculative theologizing.[48] The fact that "Jesus must be loved as a world" becomes clear only if we appreciate the mysticism of a saint like Francis of Assisi.[49] Granting the difficulty of grounding the practices of saints in rational terms, Teilhard maintains that they are imposed reality, always moulding our own efforts while lying beyond our systematization.[50] Those saints especially appealed to Teilhard who embodied a deep-seated passion for all that made up the life of their own times.[51] They attempted to draw out from matter whatever of spiritual power it possessed. Some examples he specifies are St. Francis, St. Angela of Foligno, St. Catherine of Siena.[52] But since we must develop ourselves, we cannot slavishly imitate any one saint, for that may very well be a betrayal to our own calling.[53] Our union with the saints through the expanse of time is centered in the risen Christ, the supreme personal. We are joined in a communion of saints by our convergence upon this one single Center--at once natural and supernatural--drawing to itself the whole of creation.[54]

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[44] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 58 (F 86).

[45] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 50 (F 40).

[46] Ibid., p. 51 (F 41).

[47] Ibid., p. 48 (F 38).

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[48] Letter to Auguste Valensin, Dec. 29, 1919, cited by Rideau, Guide, pp. 657-58, footnote 39. We find a similar reaction in Correspondence, n. 2, 1919, p. 52.

[49] WTW, "The Mystical Milieu," 1917, p. 148 (F 167). Teilhard ordinarily used a less startling expression for "Jesus must be loved as a world." He more often expressed the idea as "Christ is loved as a person; he compels recognition as a world." WTW, "The Priest," 1918, p. 213 (F 293).

[50] Correspondence, n. 2, 1919, p. 52.

[51] On January 22, 1927, Teilhard wrote: "The spiritual life of all the great saints has been a richer and more intense life, not a restricted life." TF, p. 56.

[52] MM, Oct. 9, 1916, p. 130 (F 166-67). Also WTW, "The Mystical Milieu," 1917, p. 148 (F 167). Teilhard would have shared the spirit of Nikos Kazantzakis' Saint Francis (New York: Ballantine, 1966), for as Kazantzakis points out, from St. Francis we learn "the obligation to transubstantiate the matter which God entrusted to us, and turn it into spirit."

As necessary as the concrete examples of saints--men like ourselves--are, ultimately the one rule for development is: "be oneself." In his spiritual reading during the time of the First World War, Teilhard found this advice in the writings of Abbé de Tourville.[55] While acknowledging the dangers in such a tack, Teilhard poses the question: "if people try to be 'pioneers' not out of personal pride and ambition, but from love of the Church and of truth, and with absolute trust in God and acceptance of His will before all else, can God allow them to cut themselves off from Him?"[56] The common denominator in all saints grounds itself in the truth that "God is everything and everything is God, and Christ is at once God and everything."[57] When Teilhard, then, calls for a "new formulation of holiness," he is not condemning the past.[58] He is focusing our attention on the necessity of founding our holiness in a personalistic evolutionary universe with God as its organic center. It would be foolish for us to search for support or explicit condemnation of this new attitude towards personal development in the writings of past saints.[59] For them, human progress grounded in the evidence of evolution was not even a possibility. Their lives, however, do concretely image the coherence of natural and supernatural growth which Teilhard is explicitly advocating.[60]

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[53] DM, p. 84 (F 125).

[54] In SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 77 (F 105-106), footnote 11, Teilhard further explains: "One cannot overemphasize the fact that the sanctification of souls, however personal it may be, is still essentially collective. We are spiritualized by being carried along by the spiritualization of all things. We are united to Christ by entering into communion with all men. We shall be saved by an option that has chosen the whole. And the beatific vision will be not so much an individual vision as a specific act of the Mystical Body, the Divine revealing itself to each one of us through the eyes of Christ."

[55] MM, Sept. 18, 1916, pp. 127-28 (F 163).

[56] Ibid.

The Role of Faith

If holiness demands that we take our responsibility for a world-in-genesis, we must necessarily be men of faith. According to Teilhard, to believe is to develop a synthetic vision whose first origin is undemonstrable.[61] Our Christian faith must be a coherence of a faith in the world and a faith in God.[62] We believe: (1) God is good and loving; (2) the world finds its full development in the growth through spirit in the personal. Since both these "faiths" are positive, they must be capable of growth by merging together in a unified goal or vision.[63] Once again this determines the type of saint we need today: men "who will be passionately and simultaneously animated in both types of faith and so effect in themselves, in one heart, the junction of the two mystical forces and display to those they move among, the realization of the synthesis."[64]

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[57] WTW, "The Struggle against the Multitude," 1917, p. 108 (F 126).

[58] HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, p. 136.

[59] "Note sur la notion de perfection chrétienne," 1942, ms. p. 3.

[60] R. Guardini, The Saints in Daily Christian Life (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1966), agrees with Teilhard on the importance and relevance of the saints in our lives. Guardini, however, emphasizes the incurable corruption of the world (which interpretation, according to Teilhard, makes the effort of the saint seem so futile) and its total break from the establishment of a new creation. Cf. pp. 103-111.

In our faith in God, we remain convinced that God continuously works in the universe, especially so for the believer who prays to him.[65] Yet Teilhard was more aware than most people of the natural course of events. What, then, could prayer do to effect any change? He does not hesitate to grant that events are usually not diverted from their natural course by prayer.[66] But for the man of faith, prayer might bring about the integration of an event into a new form by combining it with other events into a whole. Teilhard suggests that there are as many individual providences as there are men.[67] Each one of us, in a true sense, has his own universe which he can mould by his work and by his faith. Traditionally we have taught that God is both above his creation--transcendent--and moving within it--immanent. Providence--God's active care for the world--can be viewed in its total control of the world. In contrast, we can also see providence solely in terms of the individual believer. Because multiple events can effect one another in various combinations, Teilhard sees a way that man by his prayer can affect not the event itself (except in the case of a miracle), but the way that the event combines with other happenings in the total context of the individual's life.[68]

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[61] "Comment je crois," 1934, ms., p. 3.

[62] "Trois choses que je vois," 1948, ms., pp. 5-6. See Robert Faricy, S.J., Teilhard de Chardin's Theology of the Christian in the World (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), Ch. 1.

[63] "Le Christ évoluteur," 1942, ms., pp. 26-27. The text is published in Cahier, V.

[64] SC, "The Religious Value of Research," 1947, p. 204 (F 262).

[65] WTW, "Operative Faith," 1918, p. 238 (F 320). See also "Note sur les modes de l'action divine dans l'univers," 1920, ms., pp. 1-7.

Teilhard attempts to picture for us a world that, despite its essential unity, is as multiple as the elements which form it. Even though we can speak of a certain progress or forward evolution, we must acknowledge that it is the result of "as many different aspects (that, of course, is inevitable) but also to as many variable /modifiable/

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[66] WTW, "Operative Faith," 1918, p. 243 (F 325).

[67] Ibid., pp. 238-39 (F 320-21).

[68] Ibid.

individually isolated aspects as there are consciousnesses."[69] What Teilhard terms the "polyvalence" of the cosmos is the factor which enables prayer "to exercise a creative pre-action on the totality of phenomena."[70] By a faith expressed in prayer, each person can modify his own future without upsetting his neighbor's or interfering, in any scientifically demonstrable way, with the course of natural events. In addition, Teilhard explains:

> Chance, that is to say unpredictable encounters produced by the collective play of cosmic forces, ceases at the same time, to be repugnant to reason. On the contrary, it represents God's role in the direction of the world--or, we might say, it retains God's role intact. It is through chance (and, may we say, at the opposite pole to chance, through man's freedom) that creative power enters into the universe--the power whose specific function is to act by operating synthetically upon wholes--in other words by controlling the collective play of causes.[71]

Following along the lines of creative union, faith operates by uniting or combining into new wholes the play of forces and events in one's life.[72] Faith, whether we express it verbally in prayer or not, is the "practical conviction that the universe, between the hands of the Creator, still continues to be the clay in which he shapes innumerable possibilities according to his will."[73]

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[69] Ibid., p. 238 (F 320).

[70] Ibid., p. 239 (F 321).

[71] Ibid. In footnote 12, the French editor calls attention to the fact that Teilhard's approach to chance is in a straight line tradition of Aristotle and St. Thomas. He refers to A.-D. Sertillanges, Saint Thomas d'Aquin, 2, 57ff., "La contingence dans la nature."

[72] Ibid., p. 244 (F 326).

Faith, then, has a twofold character in its relation to the future: (1) it may affect only the totality of events in one's own universe; or (2) the adaptation of the visible universe to the requirements of each soul may look to a higher or more spiritual success rather than an immediate, temporal one.[74] By this latter possibility, Teilhard recognizes that prayer does not necessarily effect what is sought through our limited human vision which is more concerned with natural human achievement than supernatural growth in holiness. Through his faith, a believer is empowered to integrate all the forces in his life, even sickness, error, and failure, into a combination "from which his universe emerges with more sanctifying power in it and more of the divine."[75] For Teilhard, it is in this sense alone that a man of faith conquers the apparent inevitability of fate. He grants that faith will appear empty and meaningless to someone who is looking for an immediate alleviation of his suffering or a material guarantee of success in this life.[76] But if one is willing to act, buoyed up by even a rather weak faith, he will find paradoxically that the "vision of faith accompanies (or should I say 'follows'?) the action of faith."[77]

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[73] DM, p. 115 (F 169).

[74] WTW, "Operative Faith," 1918, p. 241 (F 322-23).

[75] Ibid., pp. 241-42 (F 322-23).

[76] Ibid., p. 245 (F 326-27).

As a result, while the man of faith believes in the active care of God for his world and the power of his own personal prayer to God, he is also well aware of the necessity for his own effort to develop the world. This demands a faith which accepts a value in material progress, a faith which esteems not only the intention behind the work but also the very effort of man. Specifically as Christian, our faith in the world includes a faith in the personalization drift of an evolution moving towards a supreme personal, a faith in the divinity of the historical Jesus Christ--element of the world and now its ultimate term, and a faith in the reality of the Church phylum, in which and around which Christ continues to develop his total personality.[78] It follows from a Christian's faith in the world that love is appreciated more fully as the dominating energy which effects the unification of person-elements into a supreme personality. Christ is now revealed as the term of even natural evolution, and thereby evolution is holy.[79] From this sharing in the life of Jesus Christ, an explicit understanding of grace which raises us up a peg on the ladder of cosmic evolution is granted to us. For the believer, grace becomes properly a "life-stuff" (graphically represented in the Eucharist as well as in the other sacraments), representing a crossing-over a new threshold.[80] We are actually living in a world which has been advanced to a new level of growth--a Christogenesis.

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[77] Ibid., pp. 245-46 (F 327). In HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," 1936, p. 110, Teilhard refers to his favorite faith-action image of a "walking on the water": "Instead of standing on the shore and proving to ourselves that the ocean cannot bear us up, we must venture out on its waters. . . . We must take the chance of this bold gesture."

[78] "Introduction à la vie chrétienne," 1944, ms., p. 1.

[79] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 59 (F 49); WTW, "Operative Faith," 1918, p. 246 (F 328). Teilhard was well aware that Christ must remain a supernatural response of God to the universe: "Christ, it is true, is not the center whom all things here below could naturally

Because of his confident faith, the Christian can accept an earthly society, the Church, as infallible.[81] For Teilhard, the infallibility of the Church is simply the recognition that, "in its quality of being a living organism, the Christian group contains in itself and to a higher degree the mysterious sense and potential which permits it to find, through innumerable gropings, its road to maturity and achievement."[82]

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aspire to be one with. To be destined for Christ is a gratuitous favor of the Creator we have no right to count on. Nevertheless it remains true that the Incarnation so completely recast the universe in the supernatural that, in concrete fact, we can no longer ask, or imagine, towards what Center the elements of this world, had they not been raised up by grace, would have gravitated. Physically speaking, there is only one dynamism in the present world, that which gathers all things to Christ." WTW, "Creative Union," 1917, p. 174 (F 195-96).

[80] "Introduction à la vie chrétienne," 1944, ms., p. 1.

[81] Teilhard describes the Church in various ways: "The Church, the reflecting Christified portion of the world--the Church, principal nucleus of inter-human relationships through super-charity--the Church, central axis of universal convergence, and the precise point of encounter flashing forth between the Universe and the Omega Point." "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., p. 17.

[82] "Introduction à la vie chrétienne," 1944, ms., p. 2.

His faith in the world allows a Christian to accept Church Councils as the localized organ of this infallibility or even the Pope ("formulating and expressing, not his own ideas, but the thought of the Church")[83] as a still more advanced concentration of the Christian consciousness. Such an organ of infallibility coheres with the idea of the increasing growth of consciousness into a unity--a further extension of the Law of Complexity/Consciousness. These are the aspects, specifically Christian-oriented, that follow from a faith in the world.

More generally, faith in the world energizes a man's efforts to assume control and direction of a world-in-evolution. The supernatural growth towards the maturity of the Parousia--the second coming of Christ--is intimately bound up with the natural growth of spirit extended through our persons.[84] For Teilhard, there were only two alternatives. Either the world was developing through its gropings towards something "greater than itself," which we must serve and love, or the world itself was simply an absurd movement, without purpose, and we must reject it as much as we can.[85] It is this choice that confronts man--a choice between faith and non-faith in the earth's collective spiritual progress.[86] If a man chooses the option of development, he is thrown forward to a battleline which Teilhard likes to call the "front" or the "human front."[87]

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[83] Ibid.

[84] WTW, "Operative Faith," 1918, p. 242 (F 324).

[85] TF, Aug. 6, 1947, p. 175.

[86] LT, Jan. 11, 1941, pp. 223-24.

From his experience of the trench warfare of the First World War, he gained an appreciation both of the beauty and the horror of war. The beauty, in no way, lies in war itself, but rather in the common spirit joining men in battle. A man will not be aware of any center of consciousness but his own; yet through his activity a new type of personality will reveal itself to him and blot out his petty individualism. He becomes only "secondly" his own self. "First and foremost, he is part of a boring-tool, part of a prow clearing the waves."[88] A man who takes his place in the "human front" not only sees his part in a larger whole but feels his total person vibrating with this new spirit. The "human front" represents the advanced unity of spirit, pointing the way to a threshold of further progress. Once an individual person has been admitted to this new area, it will seem certain to him that he has entered upon a previously unknown way of life. The "front" is the sign and symbol of the march towards the future. Only men of faith can plunge into that future, so that they can attempt to assume control over restricting determinisms and blind "chance."[89] Faith alone "forces the barriers of determinism and brings order to chance."[90] Still Teilhard warns against an understanding which would imply a sort of "faith-healing," along the lines of the Christian Scientists.[91] Because the emphasis for the man of faith is now focused on an evolution moving towards the supreme personal--a Christogenesis, it is therefore in an "achievement of sanctity that the sum total of the chances that punctuate the whole course of a believer's life will directly cooperate."[92] The greater the faith the individual has, the more closely will the providence of his own individual universe lead him to God.[93]

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[87] Ecrits, "La nostalgie du front," 1917, pp. 203-14. This whole essay is a developed treatment of the idea of the "human front" for which Teilhard always entertained an enthusiasm. The essay is not translated in the English WTW.

[88] Ibid., p. 210.

Under the influence of faith, this world can become more supple, more fully spiritualized, and even "sur-animated." "Sur-animation" is the new soul or life that our efforts confer upon all elements of the universe, using the natural elements to build up the cosmic Christ.[94] The effect of grace is to sur-animate.[95] Even though the first utterance of an "I believe" seems to have no visible effect on our external world, all forces previously alien, hostile, or ambivalent, take on the influence of Christ. The Christian's individual world has "entered into Christ's 'field of action.' "[96]

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[89] Working from his structure of a complexity possessing a "without" and a "within," Teilhard noted that a mass of elementary liberties in disorder comes to the same thing as determinism. "Comment je crois," 1934, ms., p. 9. Along the same line of thought, he wrote a few years later: "The determinisms in which we are ready to locate the essence of the world are simply a cloak of rigidity thrown by statistical necessity over a mass of elementary liberties." HE, "L'énergie humaine," 1937, p. 151.

[90] MM, Sept. 12, 1918, p. 235 (F 306).

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

> To the soul of the believer, who is centered vitally upon Christ, the whole impact of things (natural in their foundation, supernatural in their extension) brings a contact with Christ; he feels in them the touch of Christ's hand. And the more firmly he believes in his omni-dependence in relation to Christ, the more concrete, dominating and assured becomes the omni-action to which he is subject: Credenti, omnia convertuntur "in Christum."[97]

Activity

Even with his faith in God and the world, the Christian truly can be troubled about his activity. Positively he knows human action can be sanctified. Teilhard was fond of quoting the familiar Pauline statement, "Whatever you do, do it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."[98] It was clear even from the examples given by St. Paul that all areas of human life--not just pious or devotional exercises--were included. Positively, also, we know from the first beginnings described in Genesis that God put man in the garden to till it and make the earth bear fruit.[99] Man was given dominion over this world and was to develop it by his activity. On the negative side, however, we feel a contradiction in our faith which places the Kingdom of God in apparent total independence of this world.[100] The earth can be seen as just a "testing" place, with its thorns and thistles and sweat and pain. Negatively, too, we cannot accept seriously the value of activity in the light of a Cross which seems to mean a complete break with the things of this world.[101]

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[94] DM, p. 116 (136 F 171).

[95] Teilhard explains that sur-animation introduces a higher principle of unity into our spiritual lives. We might see this as a definition of grace in terms of its effects. Cf. DM, p. 34 (F 54).

[96] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, pp. 267-68 (F 342-43).

[97] Ibid.

[98] See the latter part of I Cor 10, concluding with verse 31.

The tradition of the Church, moreover, leaves us perplexed. On one side, we must grant that the tradition and teaching of many popes, councils, theologians, and saints, down to our present-day priest in the pulpit, have upheld the dignity of work performed in one's state of life, the search for truth, and the development of the earth's resources.[102]

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[99] Genesis 1:26-28; and 2:15.

[100] DM, pp. 18-19 (F 32-34).

[101] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, pp. 56-57 (F 45-46).

[102] DM, p. 19 (F 33-34). Some years later, Teilhard referred to the many steps the Church has taken in recent years to reconcile itself to the modern world. But, he comments, "reconciliation is not acceptance." See SC, "Some Reflexions on the Conversion of the World," 1936, pp. 126-27.

On the other side, we find in practice that a Christian often responded to the problem of reconciling worldly activity and his faith in heaven in one of three ways.[103] The first solution which might appeal to him is one of stifling his faith in the world and fixing his eyes upon the "next" life. Basically in this solution, the world is treated as if it were a wheel-maze and we were some sort of laboratory animals who run and run our appointed time within the wheel, just to keep busy and be tested for a future life.[104] The opposite extreme is taken by the man who follows a second solution. For him, the world becomes his only faith, and he loses all contact and perspective of a fuller life with God. God is perhaps pushed to a corner of a Sunday morning, but he has no place in our "getting ahead" in the world on the other days of the week. The third solution was the one more commonly assumed by Christians, in the opinion of Teilhard. These are the Christians who give up trying to reconcile a faith in God and a faith in the world. As a result, their efforts are half-hearted in both areas of life. They never belong wholly to God or wholly to things. They are afraid to excel because of this conflict. To resolve this common dilemma of the man of faith, Teilhard proposes a fourth solution, which attempts to provide for both a love of

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[103] DM, pp. 20-21 (F 35-36).

[104] The image of turning a wheel can be found in MM, Feb. 5, 1917, pp. 181-82 (F 235) and WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, pp. 56-57 (F 45-46).

God and a healthy love of the world.[105]

Intention

Once again Teilhard finds this solution within traditional practice, but he does highlight an important emphasis. In the past, spiritual books and directors encouraged activity as the means for growth towards God.[106] But the action itself tended to be obscure in its value. What was important was the intention which directs the action. Teilhard does not want to caricature the past, but he does want us to see clearly that the stress on intention--offering whatever we do to God--was almost exclusive. In a static world concept, we could not expect the same stress upon the importance of our very activity in relation to God. This value was to be less esteemed because the world itself was really not going anywhere. And so Teilhard calls this stage of emphasis on intention an incomplete solution.[107] In such a view, our activity is just a way of proving our faithfulness to God. It is the method that God uses to test our obedience and our love. Teilhard rejects this idea that the only thing that matters is whether we have acted conformably to the will of God in this abstract, even formalistic, fashion.

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[105] The reconciliation of God and world in a lived spiritual life forms the basis of most of Teilhard's spiritual writings. In the text, we will continue to rely on The Divine Milieu for its most integrated expression.

[106] DM, pp. 21-22 (F 36-38).

[107] Ibid.

What is true about this position is that intention is the necessary foundation and the beginning of Christian growth. But Teilhard looks for a coherence here, too, between the work performed and the intention directing it.[108] From his Christian background, he searches for a resurrection not only of good intentions like souls, but a resurrection also of actions and works like the bodies which clothe these intentions and "personify" them. The complete solution, then, to our problem of maintaining a faith in God and a faith in the world will be found in a coherence of intention and action.

Through our intention, every effort we make reaches out well beyond ourselves and so joins us actively with Christ in his continuing invasion of our world.[109] And through our action, the world itself is making a material progress which is necessary for the further development of spirit. To emphasize the importance of this material progress is at once a great danger and a great weakness, for success can too easily become _the_ criterion of God's favor.[110] Teilhard's emphasis on the essential roles of detachment and diminishment disallows any such interpretation of his writings. Still we cannot escape the force of his argument that for a true fire to burn in our efforts, for us to be men of passionate faith, we must appreciate and work for the value of the whole: intention joined with action.

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[108] _Ibid._, p. 23 (F 39-40).

[109] _Ecrits_, "Note pour servir à l'évangelisation des temps nouveaux," 1919, p. 374: "There is truly a secret word, explanatory of all creation, which permits one to 'feel' God in every action and in every 'passion' (God everywhere creating and everywhere bringing to birth) and is capable of beatifying our generation. . . . This word is: '_Hoc est Corpus meum._' "

[110] _WTW_, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 258 (F 343). In _WTW_, "Cosmic _Life_," 1916, p. 56 (F 45), Teilhard speaks of the necessity "to succeed" in order "to be." To have the desire to succeed, a man must be convinced not only of the merit of what he does but of its intrinsic value.

In the manner of a logician, Teilhard expresses this coherence through means of a carefully reasoned syllogism.[111] The major premise states that all of us exist for God in and through Jesus Christ. This is just another re-statement of the evolutionary movement of the personal towards the supreme personal, while at the same time affirming the traditional answer to the catechetical "why" of creation. The second premise--the minor of the syllogism--confirms the direction of evolution as expressed in the Law of Complexity/Consciousness. Matter truly is the matrix of spirit, and so all of matter awaits its proper use and domination from man who now has the possibility of conscious control. From revelation, also, we know that the world has been created with man as its master and proprietor. The conclusion which follows from the preceding premises is the final testimony to the coherence of two faiths. For all of reality exists through our persons and our personalizing efforts for God in and through Jesus Christ.[112] If we exist for God, and the world exists for us, then the world exists for God through our efforts. No matter how humble our action, we are engaged in completing God's creation. "That is, ultimately, the meaning and value of our acts."[113] Teilhard gives this warning: it is one thing to understand the words and logical structure of this reasoning; it is something else to bring it to bear on one's actual living.

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[111] DM, p. 25 (F 41-42). The syllogism reads: "At the heart of our universe, each soul exists for God, in our Lord. But all reality, even material reality, around each of us, exists for our souls.--Hence, all sensible reality, around each one of us, exists, through our souls, for God in our Lord."

The difficulty in practice arises from the loss of the total vision. For the Christian, the whole reference of his life is God. In the evolutionary context, he sees a true value in things, but only in their dependence upon and their leading him towards God. Similarly even within himself, it is not his own personal satisfaction he seeks--settling into an individualistic egoism--but a personalizing effort that can lead only to a union with a greater than he.[114] For Teilhard, the necessity of making this total evolutionary vision one's own was comparable to the traditional "desert" period (which spiritual theology has commonly recognized) before immersing oneself in the world.[115] For such an attitude--the only possible Christian attitude--there must be an oscillation between two phases of growth. The Christian has to be at the same time the most attached and the most detached of men.[116]

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[112] Teilhard laments: "Far too many Christians are insufficiently conscious of the 'divine' responsibilities of their lives . . . faith imposes on us the right and the duty to throw ourselves into the things of earth." DM, p. 39 (F 61).

[113] DM, p. 31 (F 50). Teilhard wrote to his cousin: "About what Pascal (Pensées, 72 /ed. Brunschvig/) says, you know the only sense in which I'd allow it (which is by no means, perhaps, Pascal's); geometry is not the term of our intellectual effort, but is ordered towards divinizing us, by developing the spirit in us, and can therefore be directed 'religiously' not only 'by intention' but by reason of the work it performs in us." MM, Sept. 29, 1918, pp. 241-42 (F 315). For an analysis of this "ethic of conquest," see R. Faricy, Theology of the Christian in the World, Ch. 6.

[114] DM, pp. 42-43 (F 66-67).

Detachment

Just as in our human life earth comes before heaven and life before death, so a man must really be attached before we can begin to speak about detachment.[117] Yet even the experiential priority involved only emphasizes the coherence of the two phases. Every activity demands that we leave a state of rest or relaxation.[118] Effort is required not to remain content with what has been accomplished. Upon reflection, we can see that activity, effort, work can only move from a base of detachment. We have to be willing to let go of what we have in order to make the risk for a better or fuller life. The lives of explorers like Columbus and scientific discoverers like the Curies dramatize the dynamic balance of these two phases of growth.[119] More than just an evolutionary drive, the Christian's conscious effort is motivated by his faith.[120]

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[115] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 260 (F 345), footnote 11.

[116] Teilhard exposed the conflict in these words: ". . . a subject which has always been the problem of my inner life . . . I mean the reconciliation of progress and detachment: of ardent and legitimate love for a greater earth on the one hand, and a single-minded pursuit of the kingdom of heaven, on the other. How can we be as Christian as possible and at the same time as human as possible?" Letter to Victor Fontoynont, Mar. 15, 1916, cited in Correspondence, Ch. 4, p. 84, footnote 21.

[117] In a similar relationship, Teilhard says, "You can only convert what you love: if the Christian is not fully in sympathy with the nascent world--if he does not experience in himself the anxieties and aspirations of the modern world--if he does not allow the sense of men to grow greater in his being--then he will never effect the emancipating synthesis between earth and heaven from which can emerge the parousia of the universal Christ. . . . To plunge into in order then to emerge and raise up. To share in order to sublimate. That is precisely the law of the Incarnation." SC, "Some Reflexions on the Conversion of the World," 1936, p. 127 (F 166).

Detachment, then, becomes in Teilhard's eyes a most human and personalizing quality in a Christian's life.[121] Detachment is specifically Christian in that it mirrors the central mystery of Christianity--the Incarnation. Just as Christ had to immerse himself in matter, that is, become incarnate, in order to be raised in power, so too man must "incarnate" himself in the world of matter in order to break out of it by raising it to a new order.[122] Baptism also symbolizes for the Christian this movement in his life: immersion, the breaking out of, and the raising up to a new life. Detachment is viewed as a passage; it becomes a strategy of conquest. It does not consist in condemnation or rejection, but in an encountering, a dealing with, a sublimation.[123] Teilhard thinks in terms of a "detachment through super-attachment."[124] Only if a man is detached can he take free control and responsibility for the progress of the universe.

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[118] DM, pp. 40-41 (F 62-63).

[119] Sur le bonheur, "Réflexions sur le bonheur," pp. 42-43 and 53-54.

[120] DM, p. 42 (F 66).

[121] Ibid., pp. 41-43 (F 65-67).

[122] The Scripture text which Teilhard frequently quotes in order to express his approach to the world is: "Descendit . . . ascendit . . . ut repleret omnia." See his development in "Note sur la notion de perfection chrétienne," 1942, ms., p. 3. The application adopted in the text can be found in "L'évolution de la chasteté," 1934, ms., pp. 7-8.

Before all else, the world is a work of creation continued in Christ.[125] This realization is the motivating factor in the Christian's laborious efforts to make progress. In fact, because of the Incarnation, "the first form of adoration that a man renders to God is more than (it is necessary to do this also) to contemplate the things around us, to think, to abstain, but rather to create a little more that which is around us."[126] Effort requires that a man reject mere selfish enjoyment or following the line of least resistance. Besides these forms of detachment, we could look ahead positively to see the energy required for broadening one's grasp of matter in order to subject it to spirit, and for renewing one's own inner life so that it is always open for greater truth and higher ideals. Detachment is necessitated in the demands of time, a family, our country, or in the pursuit of any goal.

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[123] SC, "Some Reflexions on the Conversion of the World," 1936, p. 123 (F 162).

[124] "Note sur la notion de perfection chrétienne," 1942, ms., p. 3.

[125] Correspondence, n. 1, 1919, p. 33

[126] "Intégration de l'homme dans l'univers," 1930, ms., p. 14.

> Of its very nature, work is a manifold instrument of detachment, provided a man give himself to it faithfully and without rebellion. In the first place, it implies effort and a victory over inertia. And then, however interesting and intellectual it may be (and the more intellectual it is, the truer this becomes) work is always accompanied by the painful pangs of birth. Man can only escape the terrible boredom of monotonous and commonplace duty to find themselves a prey to the inner tension and the anxieties of "creation." To create, to organize, material energy, or truth, or beauty, brings with it an inner torment which prevents those who face its hazards from sinking into the quiet and closed-in life wherein grows the vice of self-regard and attachment (in the technical sense).[127]

Nothing, according to Teilhard, is more crucifying than this full-hearted effort. Again this kind of passion identifies detachment as peculiarly Christian.

Attachment and detachment are two properties of all Christian endeavor. They harmonize the more easily the more we embody the truth that the supernatural Pleroma grows out of the natural universe according to a law of transformation, not of rupture.[128] Teilhard applies the word transformation both to the supernatural re-arranging of the elements of this world "to the point of making them more and other than they were" and to the absolute necessity of the natural elements providing the fuel and proper material to the whole work of salvation.[129] The process of growth combines its two integral phases of attachment and detachment in an infinite number of subtle variations.

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[127] DM, pp. 40-41 (F 63-64).

[128] Correspondence, n. 1, 1919, p. 33. H. de Lubac, L'éternel féminin, pp. 130-31, recalls three times /the only three?/ when Teilhard uses rupture for his transformation idea: Zanta, Aug. 23, 1929, p. 95 (F 105); Note of Dec. 20, 1917; and DM, p. 78 (F 118), where Teilhard qualifies the word rupture by "in a sense."

Three general rhythms of joining these components can be described as (1) continuous, (2) alternating, or (3) sporadic.[130] From Teilhard's observation, some men seem to be called by God to an effort that is identified with an ever greater wrenching of themselves from what they have. Sometimes, too, this continuous detachment seems tied to the period of encroaching old age. Other men seem to alternate between times of restful enjoyment and struggling exertion to reach beyond themselves. This group would appear to live the normal dedication required of a Christian. There are still others who form a more peculiar circle of a very sporadic life of detachment, whose totality, however, is harmonized into a controlled and progressive whole. Here, again, it is not unusual to see this sporadic form in the period of youth where there is a distinct phase of self-development followed later by a period of alienation, suffering, and detachment. The emphasis in any of the possible rhythms applicable to one's life must be placed on the balance which they are meant to effect. For most Christians, the balance attained in their endeavors focuses the growth and transfiguration of their lives more in an inward way rather than through some external manifestation. For true growth lies in this movement of spirit to ever greater personalization. Yet there are other men whose balance is only re-gained by crossing over the thresholds which mark the passage from an ordinary, good, and holy Christian life to wholly new levels of chosen renunciations and mystical states of union with God. As in every life-process, detachment has an optimum level in each person's life, and "it is just as harmful to go beyond it as not to attain it."[131]

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[129] Ibid.

[130] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 263 (F 348). The development in the text is from this section of Teilhard's essay.

What detachment must not mean has sometimes found expression in the notion that God grows in us by destruction or substitution rather than by transformation.[132] Just as Teilhard has carefully thought out the role of love, for example, in marriage, so here too a love of God does not mean destroying or diminishing oneself since this is the destruction of the very gift. Detachment emphasizes the necessity of growth, but a growth that is always forward and upward. It is not a question of just substituting one object for another, as miles of flat road succeed miles on our journey.[133] Detachment looks to a reaching out for spirit while grasping matter. It is the conscious and eager acceptance of the task of seeking out and crossing new thresholds of personalization--a continuation of the whole evolutionary movement. "We must have a great love of the world if we are passionately to wish to leave it behind."[134]

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[131] DM, p. 75 (F 113).

[132] Teilhard interpreted detachment in the destructive sense from the influence of Eastern mysticism, especially Buddhism. Although in later life he appreciated Eastern religion with a little more balanced perspective, in 1933 we find him writing to Henri de Lubac: "I'm a strong believer in the rhythm of attachment-detachment. But I feel that the particular, specific nature of the Buddhist detachment determines the weaknesses and dangers of oriental religions. The Buddhist denies himself in order to kill desire (he doesn't believe in the value of being). The authentic Christian does the same by a super-abundance of desire, a super-abundance of faith in the value of being. It is one of those cases where like appearances conceal conflicting realities." Cited in Correspondence, Ch. 4, p. 77, footnote 8.

Too often, Teilhard complains, we have confounded tutiorism--following the safer course--with prudence.[135] We prefer security to the quest for greater truth. Worse still, avoiding the risk of a fault becomes more important in our eyes than attempting to carry off a new position for God. We hide from the effort of real attachment to things and true love for others with the excuse that we fear dividing our heart from God. But if we understand detachment as a passage or a transformation, we should have no difficulty in facing up to such a fear. Our attachment to things is not univocal with our love for persons and our love for even a wife or husband is not univocal with a love for God. God is the supremely personal, in whom we find ourselves joined in and through the cosmic Christ. Detachment is the purifying and centering of all attachments and human loves, even that of a husband and wife. And the idea of "centering" provides Teilhard with his image of a planetary system.[136] He compares our human loves to stars and the love of God to a sun. As he admits, "there can be only one sun in the heaven of our hearts--but why should there not be lesser stars?"[137] Through the light of the stars themselves, the divine sun becomes ever brighter for us. Detachment no longer means to quit the world. "This word has now come to mean to travel through the world, to extend it, to utilize it, to develop it, (by an effort sustained in all the domains, even those reputed, though wrongfully, 'profane') for that which is higher, farther, greater, in the Universe."[138]

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[133] DM, p. 41 (F 63).

[134] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 262 (F 347).

[135] "L'évolution de la chasteté," 1934, ms., p. 2.

Teilhard calls our attention to a detachment that is also characteristic of a society, and he particularizes it in the example of the Church.[139] The oscillations that mark the attempt to maintain a dynamic balance are much slower than those present in the life of an individual person, because of the larger scale. But history presents a fairly clear picture of their evidence. For example, Teilhard singles out the Desert Fathers in the first centuries of Christianity for their characteristic impulse to self-denial and a world-fleeing detachment.[140] He explains that this was Christianity's initial reaction against pagan materialism and the attempt to set out plainly the distinctive Christian renewal of the world. In other words, this period in the Church fits a sporadic movement with a heavy emphasis on a growth through detachment. Our own age, in Teilhard's opinion, needs a "rejuvenation of the supernatural forces, to be effected by driving roots deep into the nutritious energies of the earth."[141] Unless our religion is sufficiently grounded in a real attachment, its very powers of detachment are enfeebled. The Church, too, must try to maintain a balance which corresponds to the needs and signs of the time. Teilhard himself thought that the signs pointed to a Church more passionately involved in furthering human development--encouraging an attachment and an admiration for the world which must necessarily entail a detachment from the *status quo*. The cosmic Christ--the supremely personal Center of the Parousia--calls us as a society to greater effort in winning our human sovereignty over the world.[142] Thereby we make ready the Kingdom of God.

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[136] Ibid., p. 10.

[137] Ibid.

[138] "Le sens humain," 1929, ms., p. 12.

[139] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 262 (F 347).

Temptations to a lack of detachment and so to a lack of growth are many. We easily fall into fear at the prospect of toil. Too quickly can we accept a less irksome life, shutting ourselves off from what may disturb or discourage us. We might even limit ourselves to a social contact with only those people who present no challenge to us, people with whom we are "comfortable." With our diminution of social contact, a corresponding diminution in our personality results. For just as we don't like the burden of effort imposed by our neighbor, so we try to escape from any challenge from our own spirit. We seek to avoid responsibility. Our motto becomes: "take the easier road."[143] Another form of temptation is found in the idea of "let's enjoy what we have." In this case, it is not so much a backward movement, a shrinking back from detachment and so from growth, but rather an attempt to make no movement at all. Traditionally, we have characterized such an attitude as hedonistic. A certain effort may have to be employed, but it is not an effort aimed at growth. Work is only performed with a view towards personal pleasure. Again we can appreciate how an enclosed egoism begins to thrive in such an atmosphere. Because no growth is sought, detachment has no place in this way of life.

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[140] *Ibid.*

[141] *Ibid.*

[142] *WTW*, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 62 (F 51).

Teilhard liked to make graphic these tendencies in all men by the use of a mountain-climbing image. Two more developed instances of the image are found in The Divine Milieu and "Réflexions sur le bonheur."[144]

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[143] Ibid., pp. 30-31 (F 21-22).

[144] DM, pp. 82-84 (F 123-26); Sur le bonheur, "Réflexions sur le bonheur," pp. 15-22. This same essay, included in Cahier, II, has this image on pp. 55-57.

In The Divine Milieu he stresses the mountain-climbing expedition as a picture of life. Our job is to move forward and upward to a sun-lit peak, still shrouded in mist. We have to use the rocks and crevices for hand- and foot-holds in order to keep on climbing. And so we gladly grasp these material objects as necessary for our forward movement. Yet if we try to hold on to them, we will make no progress at all and perhaps even slip backwards. If we try to take a rock with us, it only hinders our climbing. As a result, we experience the need to detach ourselves from the good and useful objects we have at hand in order to continue in our forward direction.

In "Réflexions sur le bonheur," Teilhard is focusing not so much on the climbing itself as on the types of climbers. He divides them into three types: (1) the lazy or tired, (2) the contented or the bon vivants, and (3) the seekers.[145] The tired claim that it is better to go back down to the village where there is peace and quiet. The contented maintain that there is no need to go beyond the meadow where they are happy and free from any further effort. The seekers see the mountain ahead of them and experience the drive toward growth which demands leaving the village and the meadow behind. In such a growth, Teilhard points out, there lies true happiness.[146] For it is the only growth which is in conformity with man-in-evolution, a growth through detachment.

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[145] Sur le bonheur, "Réflexions sur le bonheur," pp. 16-17.

[146] Ibid., pp. 23-25; 47.

CHAPTER III

DIMINISHMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

> "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the
> earth and dies, it remains alone; but
> if it dies, it bears much fruit."
> John 12:24

"The further one progresses in life, the more one changes. And the more one changes, the more one dies. This is precisely the law that governs our development."[1]

In a paradox of evolutionary progress--a paradox which the Christian life makes all the more evident--a true development of an element eventually effects a lessening of its individual center. Only by a breaking down of an organized and unifying center within the individual element can there be produced a re-structuring on a new and higher level of unions with other centers. This movement we have observed in the evolutionary development from a carefully structured and unified atom to its being re-centered in the more complex unity of the molecule, which in turn is re-centered in the complexity of the cell.[2] Teilhard's Law of Complexity/Consciousness has captured this basic thrust in evolution. When he studied the development of man in the light of this evolutionary law, he hoped to provide a deeper understanding of the role of this re-centering in the growth process of the individual human person.[3] Teilhard used the correlative terms of *centration* and *excentration* (sometimes, *decentration*) or else *personalization* and *depersonalization.* This chapter will stress an understanding of the second half of these correlative terms. For Teilhard remained convinced that a man must appreciate the role of a dying to his own self (a "going out of" [ex-] his own center or a "breaking down of" [de] his personal limitations) if he is to seek passionately his fullest personal development.

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[1] WTW, "Operative Faith," 1918, p. 242 (F 324).

The Christian Context

According to Teilhard, as we have seen, the Christian has a greater duty and responsibility, precisely as a Christian, to develop and perfect the world in which he lives.[4] An evolutionary perspective emphasizes the role that men must take in the direction and control of evolution. Moreover, as Christian men, we know that our activity is always specifically in the context of a growth in holiness--our drawing closer to the Universal Christ. Yet if our activity is loyal both to nature and to grace, we quickly become aware of the inevitability and the importance of detachment.[5] Teilhard's emphasis on detachment is essential for the fulfillment of his vision. The necessity of overcoming our own inertia at the beginning of a task, the conquest of a complacency in a job well done, the risk of moving out into the unknown or the untried are all occasions for detachment. As we become more and more enthused in our preparation of the world for the Parousia we find ourselves increasingly drawn not just towards our own self-developing activities, but expanding our interests and concern for the development of other men. Because of our faith in Christ, we are on fire not with mere abstract ideals but with a concrete goal of realizing our union with a "greater than ourselves."[6] Convinced as we are of the movement of evolution from matter to spirit, we become painfully aware of the physical limitations and restrictions of our bodily life so that we look forward to some sort of release. This desire to escape does not originate in disappointment; rather it is the logical development of a Christian effort which inspires man with the intense desire to die to himself in some way in order to become more in and through union with the Universal Christ. In so far as this world of matter always retains something other than Christ, the power of its attraction for the Christian remains limited. We continue to press forward for "those regions where activity is the most far-reaching in its ambitions, the least self-centered in its outlook, the most chaste in its dreams of union."[7]

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[2] Cf. our treatment of this evolutionary movement in Chapter I, under the section entitled, "Evolution is Going Towards Spirit" (pp. 33ff.).

[3] See *Sur le bonheur,* "Réflexions sur le bonheur," pp. 33-39. As H. de Lubac, *Religion*, p. 150, footnote 71, points out, Teilhard is right in line with the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas--cf. *ST* II II, q. 64, a. 2 and I II, q. 109, a. 3.

[4] R. Faricy, *Theology of the Christian in the World,* is a study specifically on the point of Christian responsibility.

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[5] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, pp. 260-61 (F 345-46).

[6] DM, pp. 42-43 (F 66-67).

Detachment becomes something much broader than individual or societal conquest of immediate limitations. Teilhard sees detachment widening as it takes on the notion of a "breaking-out" from the physical world altogether. The whole effort at developing ourselves and the world around us is combined with a plea for Christ to take these very gifts to himself. This is the moment of the "specifically Christian operation, when Christ, while preserving in man the treasures of human nature, empties him of his ego-centrism and takes his heart."[8] Detachment, we discover, is like a bridge which leads to an area quite different from self-developing activities.[9] Teilhard has guided us towards that vast expanse which makes up more than half of our lives--human passivities.

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[7] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 74 (F 102).

[8] WTW, "Forma Christi," 1918, p. 261 (F 346).

[9] Teilhard was convinced that the "emptiness can only be hollowed out in the core of a pre-existing fullness." In his exchange with Maurice Blondel, he continued to insist upon the preliminary importance of man's activity and positive growth before we begin to ask for detachment and passivity. "The fruit must be ripe before it can split and open." See Correspondence, 1919, p. 51.

The Role of Passivities

There is an old saying that from the moment of birth we begin to die. The truth of this blending is often ignored when we attempt an artificial division between activities and passivities. Just as our life is made up of a continuous flow, at once of attachment and of detachment, so too do we experience a similar movement in activities and passivities, growth and diminution, possession and renunciation.[10] Our effort as specifically Christian is to make full use of this given coherence of elements into a single movement towards God. The direction of this movement is always towards true personal development, and the emphasis in development is always placed on "being more" and taking possession of the world "in order to be."[11] In our everyday lives, as Teilhard points out, it is only when we full-heartedly devote ourselves to growth that we have the ability to accept our passivities as meaningful. For "being more" gradually appears as a movement in the direction of a "being in another."[12] In reaching out for the new threshold ahead of us, we find the usual necessity of detaching ourselves from the center of unity which we have reached in order to align ourselves with a new and deeper center. We commonly discern this maturing process, not only in man but throughout the whole evolutionary context. As Teilhard explains it, excentration is an internal process, that is, a process dealing with the "within" of things since centers are affected by being broken out of the unity which they have achieved in order to be re-centered into a higher unity.[13] This process is essential for the forward and upward direction of evolution.

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[10] DM, pp. 69-70 (95-96, F 106-107).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

Following Teilhard in the large picture of evolution which he draws, we have little difficulty in accepting the phenomenon of excentration on the levels of evolution below man because we can appreciate the movement to a higher complexity. He has called our attention, for example, to atoms retaining something of their centreity while at the same time losing something by being joined together in the complexity of the molecule. But since there is a superior and unique value to the human spirit (or "within") and such a long-term effort is required for individual personalization, excentration may not appear desirable in the line of development for a human being. Once again Teilhard requires us to step back in order that we can enlarge our vision of man in the Christian phenomenon. For he sees that the Christian has a revealed and concrete response to the question about the value of human excentration in the person of Jesus Christ--God-made-man, crucified to his death as a limited earthly element, risen in power and in the Spirit, and now in genesis as the Universal Christ.[14] In the Teilhardian perspective, the genesis of the Universal Christ is even now available to us through the media of the created world. Our whole effort, as we have seen, is directed to a building of this earth so that every element--ourselves, along with our world--is brought to the fullest possible development for Christ. Teilhard reminds us that we cannot simply identify earthly perfection with the Kingdom of God.[15] This would be an example of the facile and false concordism which he was always so much aware of. But that there is a connection between a world brought to its development by mankind's own maturity and activity and the moment of Christ's coming in the Parousia, Teilhard remained convinced. Contrary to a certain possible apocalyptic interpretation, he did not see the earth being consumed or destroyed on the final day of God's judgment, but rather the world was truly to be completed or consummated.[16]

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[13] The notion of excentration is touched upon in many of Teilhard's essays, but it takes a compilation of many texts to manufacture a single, developed treatment. For example, see HU, "The Mass on the World," 1923, p. 31 (F 30-31); DM, p. 61 (F 93) and the French editor's Note, pp. 66-68 (94-95 F 100-102); FM, "The Grand Option," 1939, pp. 55-56 (F 76-77). Excentration is an aspect of transformation, and so it is related to other aspects such as integration (SC, "My Universe," 1924, pp. 71-72, F 99-101) and assimilation (Correspondence, 1919, p. 51). The general idea of excentration, along with the other aspects, is frequently treated in the essays included in WTW.

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[14] Teilhard repeatedly points out that the Cross is always standing upright in his phenomenal vision of the world. In fact, it becomes even more and more upright, at the crossroads of all values and of all problems, right at the heart of humanity. "The Cross ceases to offer itself to us especially (or even exclusively) as the sign of a victory over sin, in order to reach its fullness, which is to become the dynamic and complete symbol of a Universe in the state of a personalizing Evolution." Cf. "Ce que le monde attend en ce moment de l'église," 1952, ms. p. 5.

[15] SC, "My Universe," 1924, pp. 73-75 (F 102-103).

This consummation of the world, just as our own personal development, is the result of excentration. Especially in regard to persons, Teilhard stresses that excentration is not a destruction. For him, the passion and death of Jesus Christ stands not for destruction, but for the consummation of his work since such an excentration as his death has brought about the genesis of the living Body of Christ. In our own case, the elements of the world which we have conquered and made our own are meant to stay with us "through some subtle essence of themselves--but their *center* shifts."[17] And so, too, are we as Christian men meant to carry over something of our individuality--the very center which defines a person--into the supreme personal. As Teilhard explains,

> Herein lies the essence of Christianity, as I see it: to take a universe which tended to be centered upon itself and to excentrate it over to God. Isn't this one of the profound facets of the Incarnation-Redemption? Before God and world could fuse in the pleroma, it was necessary that God somehow *break out of His sphere* to take our imperfections into Himself and transfigure them: this is the passion; and at the same time we must be fit to be drawn into the superior *sphere* which attracts us: this is our death and mortification.[18]

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[16] Letter to R. H., Sept. 21, 1929, quoted in *Correspondence*, Ch. 7, pp. 112-13, footnote 12. Also see *Correspondence*, n. 1, p. 33 and n. 2, pp. 47-48.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

Since the Incarnation-Redemption, we can see more clearly that the first step which leads towards a Christian excentration must be the desire to press forward the development of ourselves and our world.[19] But we recognize that this development may still be rather self-centered, with a limited "Jesus-and-me" approach. The second step is the reaching out beyond everything there is in the world in the pursuit of an ever-widening ideal, focusing upon the Universal Christ. It demands a continuing victory over our own egoism and attachments. This is the time when we most painfully feel the wrenchings of detachment. In both the first and the second step, the emphasis is on our activity. Finally to complete our Christian endeavor, we pass on to a third step of cherishing the "passivities and the providential diminishments through which Christ transforms directly and eminently into himself the elements and the personality we have tried to develop for him."[20] This last step really describes the result of excentration. For a Christian, Teilhard notes, the general word, excentration, is now specified to the more particular term of a depersonalization--in Christ.[21] Apart from this depersonalization in Christ, human passivities remain a mystery without meaning for human development:

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[19] The various steps in excentration are given in a letter reportedly sent to Auguste Valensin about the time of Teilhard's writing of The Divine Milieu. The French editor of DM adds this excerpt on pp. 66-68 (F 100-102). As a matter of fact, the remarks are the result of a correspondence between Maurice Blondel and Teilhard in which Auguste Valensin acted as the middleman-contact. Consequently, the passage dates from 1919, about seven years previous to DM, and is to be found in Correspondence, pp. 35-36.

[20] Ibid. In Correspondence, n. 1, p. 33, Teilhard notes that the supernatural fullness of Christ depends on the natural fullness of the world. A little later in his exchange with Blondel, Teilhard agrees that formal logic would have the notion of fullness exclude the notion of emptiness. In life, however, there are fullnesses which are the initial form of an emptiness; and Teilhard gives the example of the main cavities of the organism which often take the form of solid fullnesses in the embryo and subsequently empty. (p. 51)

In general, we have described the passivities in human life as all those things which are not done by us, but which we undergo. If we examine any one of our conscious actions, we recognize a reaction in ourselves or in others or even in our environment.[22] This reaction to our own activity might be the pleasure or satisfaction we feel so that we want to continue on. On the other hand, it might be a reaction of sorrow or anger in others which would oppose our proceeding in a certain direction. We might also consider the example that in developing a hardier strain of wheat or rice, we may discover an accompanying destructive reaction in some other area of our environment. These reactions are things which happen to us and which inevitably and precisely coincide with our own activities. This kind of action-reaction always elicits further effort on our part.

Teilhard, however, calls our attention to a much wider and deeper area of passivities.[23] To look only at our conscious and self-directed activity and its reactions which are a form of passivity is to let a vast territory escape our attention. In this broad expanse which can remain so unknown to us, we find upon examination that there are again various reactions in us because we are undergoing something. But in this area, our own action is minimal. By way of physical passivity, we experience that our appendix can get inflamed or our liver can malfunction--a physical reaction. In a psychological passivity, we can experience a debilitating tension or a soul-searching scrupulosity over which we have no control. As an example of spiritual passivity, we sometimes feel weighed down by the selfishness and pride which well up within us in spite of ourselves. All of these levels of passivity which seem to spring up without our control and apparently independent of our activity are a part of human passivity. The key to our Christian development lies in our ability to bring the light of God's presence into the forbidding darkness of these kinds of passivities.[24]

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[21] Correspondence, p. 36.

[22] DM, pp. 46-47 (F 72-74).

[23] Ibid., p. 47 (F 73-74).

The Types of Passivities

The passivities which spring up without our control and largely independent of our personal activity fall into two large groups--each of which has to be integrated into our lives in different ways. The first group Teilhard designates as the "passivities of growth."[25] These include the favorable forces which sustain us and point the way to a successful fulfillment--all the good things which happen to us--as well as our inborn potential. For example, my intellectual potential, which is a "given" over which I have no choice, is a passivity (because it is received) of growth (because it is open to my use and development). The factor of a good public education is another example of a passivity of growth--a favorable force of the time and culture into which I happen to be born.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

The second group takes in all those hostile or opposing forces which cripple or hinder our progress. These, Teilhard calls, the "passivities of diminishment."[26] For Teilhard, diminishment is the term which sums up the various kinds of things which apparently make us less, at least according to natural human values. As Teilhard describes diminishments, they are passivities which cut into a growth of forward progress and are responsible for a certain breakdown or disruption. Since passivities of growth are a "given" and therefore pass relatively unnoticed, diminishments become the more concrete indicators of that other "half" of our lives--our passivity.[27] In so far as what we have to accept or undergo does directly limit or lessen us in the midst of a forward effort, we call these phenomena "diminishments."

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 53 (F 82).

For example, we might inherit money or be given a scholarship or be chosen for a trip around the world. All these things happen to us-- at most, perhaps, we were kind to someone or we gave a donation for a chance at a possible prize. Yet in themselves none of these are diminishments since each of them should be a stimulus for growth. They belong, therefore, under the passivities of growth. But when we are afflicted by failure, rejection, or sickness, we are properly in the area of diminishments because all of these things break into our attempt to grow and this disruption, then, appears to be the opposite of a development. While diminishments may come to our attention more readily when they hinder some specific activity, Teilhard is quick to point out their presence throughout the course of our development. In order for us to gain a better understanding of both types of passivities, we will study Teilhard's development a little more at length.

Passivities of Growth[28]

If we step back from ourselves and gaze a little more closely at the very phenomenon of life which we call our own, we are astonished. What science, Teilhard asks, will ever be able to pin down the origin of the forces that are present in life? What gives us the power to appreciate beauty and to love? The longer we examine ourselves the more we discover passivity in the most radical elements of our own powers. We are recipients at the level which we ordinarily speak of as "our" love, "our" ability, and so on. Teilhard recalls to us Christ's rhetorical question about whether any man can add a cubit to his stature. He observes that Jesus Christ was only giving a very external example of how much our life is a "given" for us. If a man cannot add to his height, how much less can he affect the potential of a musical talent or even more so of his sympathy! All these things which are a "given" in our life origins are examples of the inward passivities of growth. They affect us in our "within," giving us a certain positive and at the same time limited potential for development.

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[28] In general, the ideas in this section are taken from DM, pp. 47-49 (F 74-77).

To examine still more widely, we can consider the "without" of our lives. We soon become lost in amazement at the precarious intertwinings of threads which are necessary for our life to come about at all. The chance of our parents' meeting and marrying, the possibility of any one sexual union being productive, the whole gestation period--all are immediate examples of a total receptivity on our part to the life we call our own. Broadening our scope still more, we consider the complexity of elements necessary for the increased consciousness and the whole groping process of evolutionary development as also forming an essential backdrop to the "givenness" of our existence as free, human beings. The loving family, a civilized country, a cultured society can all be considered as favorable forces before which we are passive. Yet all these kinds of passivities formulate the potential for our growth. Our passionate effort to use to its fullest extent the potential we have been given is the true Christian reaction to the passivities of growth.

Teilhard is not proclaiming anything new when he stresses that we find ourselves once again acknowledging our duty and responsibility to grow and develop if we hope to discover God through these passivities. Only if we remain faithful to our positive action of building the earth, can we, as men of faith, hope to find Christ revealing himself in the "givenness" of this half of our lives. Yet even this perception of God is an example of a passivity of growth. According to Teilhard, the experience of God is more in the realm of a tasting or a seeing or an immediate intuition than any kind of reasoning process or product of any other human effort.[29] Basically it is a gift for which we can and must pray so that God may enter more fully into our world, enlightening especially its darknesses. As we have noted before, God's grace is ready-at-hand to excite our first look and our first prayer. In conformity with the law of evolutionary development, God expects us to seek him as we try to reach beyond the evil of risks and painful effort implied in growth.

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[29] DM, pp. 111-12.

In an appendix to The Phenomenon of Man, Teilhard describes the evil of growth as "the least tragic, perhaps, because it exalts us, though none the less real."[30] What might be called the "evil" element in growth includes the limitations on our potential and the inborn or inherited disorder and disunity in ourselves and our environment. This evil of growth is inherent in the very structure of a world-in-genesis, and it is the occasion for all the risks and effort involved in development. As a result, the passivities of growth are the basis of human victory and exaltation because from them originate the whole of our own personal development.[31] As Teilhard never fails to repeat, such a task demands a lifelong effort to grow and so to make even our passivities the occasion for living more totally in the divine milieu.[32]

Passivities of Diminishment[33]

The problem of working with our passivities really comes to the fore when we consider the passivities of diminishment. It is easy enough to explain that God is grasped in activity--in and through every life. But it is far harder not only to accept the theory of finding God in diminishment--in and through every death--but also to make this encounter a habit and practice essential to our Christian lives.

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[30] PM, pp. 340-41 (H 310-11; F 346-47).

[31] Ibid.

[32] The use of passivities is expressed clearly in Teilhard's prayer in DM, p. 50 (F 77-78).

[33] In general, the ideas in this section are to be found in DM, pp. 52-54 (F 80-84).

There can be a great hardship for even the best of Christians to accept diminishments from without. Financial loss, defeat of one's country in war, even the death of a family member or friend are all bits of an external passivity of a "being-made-less." Teilhard includes among the diminishments which affect our "without": "all the incidents and accidents of varying importance and varying kinds, the tragic interferences (upsets, shocks, severances, deaths) which come between the world of 'other' things and the world which radiates out from us."[34] He recalls the story of Job, who was reduced externally in his possessions, his friends, and even his family. Still Satan was not satisfied and asked God to touch Job in his inmost parts to see if he would then curse his God. Reflecting on Satan's strategy, Teilhard observes that, though external diminishments are very painful, we still feel in some way that we can compensate for their loss. But when it is a matter of diminishments which come from our own "within," we feel such a loss to be irretrievable.

Some of these passivities have been inborn, though not as a positive potential as in the passivities of growth. Inborn passivities of diminishment are more in the realm of strictly negative limitation, such as, physical defects, retardation in learning, character weaknesses which stem perhaps from some physical or nervous imbalance. Others develop as we go through life, sometimes breaking into our lives as in a crippling accident, or, by contrast, a slowly developing cancer which threatens our very sanity. When Teilhard includes physical defects and loss in our consideration of the "within," he is focusing not so much on the material aspect of loss, but rather on its more spiritual side in affecting our total personal development.[35] With the same kind of approach, he calls us to a consideration of time. Beyond any one form of diminishment, time continues to consume our lives so that old age eventually takes its toll in death.[36] The passage of time, then, can be viewed as the most continuing and inevitable of diminishments. For eventually death comes, and Teilhard was convinced that we must make conscious use of death too in our total development as persons.

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[34] DM, p. 53 (F 82).

The Role of Death

Death is comparable to an ocean into which all the rivers of diminishments flow. For death is the "sum and consummation of all our diminishments."[37] If we describe diminishments as evils, we can talk about the evil of solitude and anxiety which is peculiar to reflective man.[38] We can also take into account the evil of disorder and failure which encompasses both man and his world. Teilhard liked to interpret the words of Christ, "it is necessary that scandals come," in the total context of evil.[39] For in Teilhard's evolutionary framework, evil is "relentlessly imposed by the play of large numbers at the heart of a multitude undergoing organization."[40] Although death as an evil of decomposition is in one sense no more than a form of the evil of disorder and failure, still death in the more complete Teilhardian perspective is not just an evil--it is evil itself.[41] The evil of death, considered just as a physical phenomenon, signifies the total breakdown into plurality, a step backwards or downwards from union and centeredness.[42] When we consider death morally, we see that the wrong use of our freedom can mean the loss of the oneness that we are trying to achieve in our own personality, and it can mean the loss of union and love which we are seeking in interpersonal and societal behavior. Again death in this last instance means the fragmenting of the coherence we are desiring. And so death stands as the ultimate stage of all evils and all corruption.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., p. 54 (F 83-84).

[37] Ibid.

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[38] PM, pp. 339-40 (H 310, F 346). In this Appendix, which Teilhard added to The Phenomenon of Man some years after completing the manuscript, he gives a fourfold division of evil: evil of disorder and failure, evil of decomposition, evil of solitude and anxiety, and the evil of growth.--What he calls the evil of solitude and anxiety was perhaps better capsulized in the phrase, "pain of isolation," which he uses in WTW, "The Struggle against the Multitude," 1917. He comments on this phenomenon in a letter to his cousin: "It seems to me that terrestrial beings, as they become more autonomous, psychologically richer, shut themselves up in a way against one another, and at the same time gradually become strangers to the cosmic environment and currents, impenetrable to one another, and incapable of exteriorizing themselves." Teilhard goes on to reflect that only in Christ do we find a fusion in real unity, effective interaction and inter-comprehension because he is the "beatifying center of convergence and confluence,"--not only morally through his teachings but also organically through his Body. The method of this final union is death which "breaks down the barriers that keep the soul in isolation and allows it to lose itself in God. . . ." MM, Jan. 6, 1917, pp. 163-64 (F 210-12).

[39] DM, p. 58 (F 90). The Scripture quote is to be found in Mt. 18:7 and Lk. 17:1.

[40] PM, p. 340 (H 310, F 346).

With Teilhard, however, we can view death in a more positive light. For we know that physically unless the food we eat is decomposed within us, it will not be able to be absorbed into us and so be re-centered into a higher complexity. While dying is ordinarily viewed as a sinking back into the multiple, it can also be seen as the re-shaping that is indispensable for the inclusion within a higher level of evolution. The Law of Complexity/Consciousness is built upon the necessity of dominated elements losing somehow their own centers in order to be re-centered in a more advanced unity. When we consider the final stage of evolution, we know that there is a movement from the personal to the supreme personal.

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[41] DM, p. 54 (F 83).

[42] "The Multitude, all the more painful in that it exists in the most intimate depths of our lives, is at the root of all our evils." WTW, "The Struggle against the Multitude," 1917, p. 98 (F 91-92).

We acknowledge that for his highest personalization man according to Teilhard is forced to move his center outside himself to a new and higher center in the Universal Christ.[43] From the Christian point of view, this is the ultimate meaning in the life-giving function of death. Not only we, but the whole world, must be taken from its natural, physical form so that everything may be re-centered in Omega--full union with God in and through Jesus Christ.

Teilhard proposes that with the entrance of the human into the evolutionary stream, it was necessary for death to be transformed visibly into a means of union if the physiological remains of the domination of multiplicity in us were to be overcome.[44] In seeking to do his Father's will, even to the acceptance of death by crucifixion, Jesus Christ affected death as an event and caused a reversal of the human attitude toward death.[45] "He gave it, physically, the value of a metamorphosis: through which the world, with him, entered into God."[46] Christ's death and resurrection becomes the tremendous cosmic event. In imitation of Christ, we have to learn how to accept death with humility (because we still do not understand death) and even come to desire it with love (because it is manifestly God's way of bringing about fuller or better life). When we gain Teilhard's perspective, nothing by way of defeat, disaster, or sickness any longer need be feared for its death-dealing qualities. Everything is capable of being transformed and re-ordered through our faithful following of Christ. In the midst of this optimistic outlook even with regard to death, one problem still faced Teilhard in the phenomenon of sin.

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[43] SC, "My Universe," 1924, pp. 62-64 (F 91-92).

[44] Ibid. See also DM, p. 61 (F 93-94).

[45] "We are perhaps apt to see nothing more on the Cross than individual suffering and simple expiation. The creative force of this death eludes us. Let us look with a wider view: we should see that the Cross is the symbol and the foyer of an action whose intensity is inexpressible. Even from an earthly point of view, fully understood, Jesus crucified is not rejected or defeated. He is, on the contrary, the one who bears the weight and draws along the progress of the universal march ever higher towards God. Let us act like him in order to be united with him through the whole of our existence." HE, "Le signification et la valeur constructrice de la souffrance," 1933, pp. 65-66. (There is a translated version of this essay in N. Braybrooke, Teilhard de Chardin: Pilgrim of the Future (London: Libra Books, 1966), p. 26).

Sin as Diminishment

At the beginning of The Divine Milieu, Teilhard warns his readers that scant attention will be paid to moral evil and sin because he intends his book for those who have already turned from the path of error.[47] Later in a footnote, Teilhard does explicitly refer to sin among the diminishments of man.[48] Even in this context, he does not deal at length with the phenomenon of sin because he is trying to show how all diminishments can be used to bring us to fuller union with God. Sin, however, is a positive gesture of disunion and disruption.[49] As a result, sin is considered only in its weakening effect, "a deviation caused by our personal faults (even when repented)."[50] There is also the pain and scandal which the sins of others inflict upon us. Sin, from this aspect, is no different from any other lessening and like any diminishment it can lead us to further transformation. Consequently, Teilhard makes almost no distinction between physical and moral evils in the light of an evolutionary process forward and upward.

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[46] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 63 (F 92).

[47] DM, p. 12 (F 18).

[48] DM, p. 52 (F 80), footnote 1.

This view of sin as diminishment conforms well with his proposals for a better or more adequate understanding of the introduction of sin into our world--what we commonly call "original sin." As usual, Teilhard introduces us into a much larger picture. He finds in St. Paul that the sin of the first man is responsible for the entrance of death into the world.[51] And so following St. Paul, we acknowledge that sin is ultimately the key to all evil and diminishment. While Teilhard agrees that there is an essential truth contained in this passage of St. Paul, he insists that we have to free ourselves from certain limitations in the way in which this first-century Jew expressed his thought. For example, from our study of evolution, we know that death and evil have been present in creation millions of years before the appearance of man. As a result, Teilhard is more concerned to distinguish the origin of this evil of diminishment and death present in creation before man than he is to clarify the particular effect of the first personal voluntary wrong done by man.[52] The problem is that Teilhard tries to use the traditional terminology of "original sin" when he is referring to the origin of evil in the universe, and not specifically to a voluntary act of man.[53]

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[49] In 1937, Teilhard defined sin in these terms: ". . . to limit force (unless it may be to obtain through that limitation still more force)--there is sin." This definition flows from the distinction he draws between the "morality of balance" (bound in by timidity and tutiorism--the "safer" course) and a "morality of movement" (passionately desiring to discover and conquer all possible energies for Christ). See HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, pp. 133-35.

[50] DM, p. 52 (F 80), footnote 1.

[51] "Chute, redemption, et geocentrie," 1920, ms., p. 3. This essay seems to be Teilhard's earliest concentrated attempt to deal with the difficulty of original sin from an evolutionary viewpoint.

In his earliest proposal towards an understanding of the Pauline relation which has been set up between sin and death, Teilhard suggested that "original sin, taken in its generality, is not a malady specifically earthly nor one bound to human generation. It symbolizes simply the inevitable hazard of evil attached to the existence of all participated being."[54] By the fact that God creates (by uniting, according to Teilhard), he enters into a struggle with evil because evil is the "essential reaction" (the rupturing or breaking down) at the other end of the creative act--the "backside" of creation.[55] In an essay about two years later, Teilhard narrowed down his general proposal so that, referring to a particular act of first man, original sin is specifically "in an act instantaneous and localized, the perennial and universal law of failing which is in humanity by reason of its being '*in fieri*,' "[56] Even with this interpretation Teilhard maintains a very wide perspective. For he sees a deeper meaning in the persons of Adam and Eve; they are the symbols of mankind moving Godwards. Eden is salvation constantly offered to all, refused by many, and attained by man in unity with Jesus Christ.

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[52] Rideau, Guide, has a valuable summary of Teilhard's ideas on original sin, pp. 538-40. R. Faricy, Theology of the Christian in the World, pp. 153-62, stresses the concern of Teilhard to express original sin as a cosmic condition, without denying a particular application to man. Faricy emphasizes that Teilhard's desire was to safeguard the Christian understanding of Christ as Lord of the Universe and at the same time to stress the importance of the world and the Christian responsibility in the world. G. Crespy, Le pensée théologique de Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1961), makes a similar observation on p. 130.

[53] J. Maritain, The Peasant of the Garonne, pp. 306-307, seems unable to follow Teilhard in this distinction between the origin of evil in the universe and the first voluntary wrong act of man.

In 1942, Teilhard returned to his more general description of original sin as something transcending the limits of any one particular time or event.[57] Original sin, to his way of thinking, is more like a face or global modality of evolution, representing the action of negative forces of counter-evolution in creation. Perhaps Teilhard would agree that entropy gives us a glimpse of this kind of negative force in creation. When he takes up the theme of original sin five years later, Teilhard continues to reflect along the same lines which we have seen.[58] If the creative act of God is intelligible only as a gradual process of arrangement and unification (the Teilhardian theory of creative union), then the multiple is the original mode of participated being. Only a transcendent God is the fullness of being, and so the whole multitude of creation participates in being. Teilhard's multiple is similar in function to the Aristotelian-scholastic prime matter. Within this evolutionary framework, statistically disorder is bound to appear--in pre-living states because of a unity still to be achieved or from a breakdown in unity, and so too pain when life appears, and sin in its true theological meaning when man exercises his freedom.[59] As a result, Teilhard notes that if we want to continue to speak about original sin in the world, "it can only be everywhere and for all time, from the first form to the farthest nebula."[60] Original sin, in this Teilhardian sense, impregnates the whole universe, and that is why Christ has meaning in terms of the whole of creation--and not just sinful man. Teilhard insists that we must see Jesus Christ no longer as an "isolated fact, but as a general condition affecting the totality of history."[61] It is only within the more general perspective of the origin of evil that we can properly place the voluntary disruptive act of first man--what has been traditionally identified as original sin. This sin for us now takes its place as a passivity bound up with a free creation; it is the opposite side--the

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[54] "Chute, redemption, et geocentrie," 1920, ms., p. 3.

[55] *Ibid.* Teilhard's own wording for the description of original sin is "*l'envers de toute creation.*"

[56] "Note sur quelques représentations historiques . . . du péché originel," 1922, ms., p. 6. This essay is probably the source of Teilhard's first difficulties with Roman authorities, leading to his exile in China.

[57] "Le Christ évoluteur," 1942, ms., pp. 8-9.

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[58] "Réflexions sur le péché originel," 1947, ms., pp. 2-4.

[59] The three "thresholds" of evil are listed in "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., p. 30. P. Smulders, Design, pp. 163-64, picks out the statistical law of disorder applied to man and sin as the weakness in Teilhard's attempt to account for the universality of sin. Smulders claims that the statistical law of sin could never lead to more than a certain percentage of evil. Although Smulders does include a competent, though cautious, appendix on the subject of original sin, he should have given more credit to the development of Teilhard's thought.--It is especially in the area of evil and sin that we must keep in mind the Teilhardian doctrine of analogy. Although we can talk of evil on the levels or crossing the thresholds of pre-living, living, and human, our understanding must undergo "the essential correction that must always be applied to our views each time we try to follow any line of reality

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through a new circle of the universe. The world is completely transformed from one circle to another. It undergoes an interior enrichment and recasting. On every occasion, in consequence, it presents itself to us in a new state, in which the sum of its earlier properties is partly retained, and partly given a new form." *SC,* "The Phenomenon of Man," 1928, p. 91 (F 122).--Analogous to the proportion between complexity and centration, then, the possible intensity and magnitude of evil is proportioned to the richness of the circle of creation attained. Man has the greatest potential and at the same time the greatest responsibility for evil.

[60] "Réflexions sur le péché originel," 1947, ms., p. 2. Tresmontant, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,* pp. 96-97, praises Teilhard for liberating us from the gratuitous idea of an "accidental" evil. Death, evil, and sorrow are an integral part, in the essence of things, of the process of creation. From a *physical* examination of the problem, it is unjust to think that God "could have" made a world without evil and sorrow. But Tresmontant criticizes Teilhard for trying to assume the right to say what God "could" or "could not" do.

[61] "Réflexions sur le péché originel," 1947, ms., p. 3.

"backside"--of true human development promised and manifested in the Christ-event.[62]

Our Attitude Towards Diminishment

Our reaction to diminishment is essentially the same, whether it be physical or moral, and whether caused by other persons or by natural events.[63] The first phase is to struggle against any lessening of ourselves with all our might. Teilhard points out that this attitude would be in imitation of God our Creator and our Father. God cannot be loving and at the same time indifferent against any backward drift to multiplicity in his creation. The very drives and energies with which he has endowed his creation are meant to unite and converge. The struggle itself is always against the multitude, just as Teilhard entitled one of his early essays.[64] In the biological life-forces we can witness this effort to withstand disease and disorder. A defense, for example, is produced in blood cells and in functions of organs to try to offset an unwanted invader. Enlarging our horizons to the history of mankind, we can rejoice in the continuing victory which man has brought about by his research to conquer disease and malfunctioning organs. A man of faith can appreciate the hand of God which raises up and inspires these benefactors of mankind. In fact, while Teilhard grants that many of these scientists and researchers may be very far from acknowledging God explicitly in their own lives, their efforts point the way for others to see the divine influence.[65] And the thankful response of men to such benefactors above all racial and national antipathies is again an instinctual goal to that convergence of all men towards which the divine presence is drawing us.

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[62] The Passion of Christ is seen in a far different light by Teilhard in relation to his idea of the presence of sin in the world. "The world, and subjection to the world, and the duty of serving the world, are hard to bear, like a cross; and it was to force us to believe this that Christ wished, overlooking all the highways of the earth, to rise up in the form of the Crucifix, the symbol in which every man could recognize his own true image." WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 67 (F 56).

[63] The following section which outlines the strategy in the face of diminishments is to be found in DM, pp. 55ff. (F 86ff.).

[64] Cf. WTW, "The Struggle against the Multitude," 1917, pp. 93-114 (F 111-32).

All of us in our own ways attempt to reduce to a minimum the physical evils which afflict us. It must also be true of our reaction to moral evils. Our first effort must be to struggle against the evil environment which might surround us, the bad example of friends, the selfishness and egoism which comes from within us. In the face of diminishments of any sort, the first phase of our human act is always to struggle. The only way which we can hope to find God is "by loathing what is coming upon us and doing our best to avoid it."[66] In this attitude of repulsion and struggle, we closely identify ourselves with the action of God.

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[65] DM, pp. 55-56 (F 86-87).

[66] Ibid., p. 56 (F 87).

Realistically we know that there are times when we fail despite our struggle with God against diminishments. We cannot always avoid suffering and the various occasions when our endeavors fail. Still less can we escape old age which comes with the passage of time so that in death we seem to have fallen in a final defeat. Teilhard grants that evil, even physical evil, is one of the most baffling mysteries for men.[67] We find it difficult to reconcile evil which seems to show its mastery over us so inevitably with the creative power and goodness of God. The solution to the problem of evil is along the same lines which Teilhard has proposed for our more adequate understanding of the presence of sin in the world.[68] We must understand and appreciate the meaning and value of "participated being." The difficulty, of course, arises from the fact that everything we experience is participated being, so that we cannot step outside our own limits to get a point of comparison. As we have seen before, Teilhard emphasizes that only a transcendent God is the fullness of being. He was convinced that his own theory of creative union led to a better grasp of the necessity of evil in so far as we can approach a solution.[69] If God can create only by uniting (Teilhard's basic postulate which he draws from observation of phenomena), then all incompleteness and disorder stem from a creation which is still in the process of uniting.[70] Within the human, reflective element, we have a further extension of this disorder in the fact of an original or first fault (the sin of the first Adam, in St. Paul's terminology)--the misuse of freedom in man.[71] The effort of God to join intimately to himself the beings he has created presupposes a gradual growth process. But in order to develop, we

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[67] Ibid., pp. 57-58 (F 87-90). In AE, "L'énergie spirituelle de la souffrance," 1951, p. 255, Teilhard observes: "Yes, the more man becomes man, the more serious becomes the problem of evil and the more ingrained in his flesh, his nerves, and his mind, the problem of understanding evil and of suffering it."

[68] See the preceding section of this chapter on "Sin as Diminishment," (pp. 120-126).

[69] Specifying his theory of "creative union" (WTW, 1917, pp. 151-76, F 171-97) to his personalized universe, Teilhard asks: "How can

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suffering be introduced into a personal universe? My response to this question, the most agonizing there is for the human spirit, will be the following: not only does the problem of evil not make for a special difficulty in the universe which I have considered, but it finds its most satisfying theoretical solution and even a sketch of a practical solution." He goes on to describe three reasons why a personalizing evolution is painful: (1) the pain of plurality--from lack of union or union unachieved or broken; (2) the pain of differentiation--in order to unify oneself or be united to others; (3) the pain of transformation--in order to change and so to grow. "There is nothing more beatifying than union attained; but nothing more laborious than the pursuit of union." HE, "Esquisse d'un univers personnel," esp. pp. 105-109.

[70] In "Note sur les modes de l'action divine dans l'univers," 1920, ms., p. 9, Teilhard writes: ". . . it seems contradictory (to the nature of participated being) to imagine that God could create an isolated thing. Only one Being can exist in isolation: ens a se. Everything which is not God is essentially multitude--multitude organized in him, and multitude organizing itself about him." Cf. footnote 60 above.

[71] "The (intellectual) problem of evil vanishes. Since, in effect, in this perspective, physical suffering and moral faults are introduced inevitably into the world, not in virtue of some deficiency in the creative act, but through the very structure of participated being (that is, by way of a statistically inevitable by-product of the unification of the multiple), it contradicts neither the power nor the goodness of God." See "Réflexions sur le péché originel," 1947, ms., p. 5.

cannot avoid the risks (increased, on our reflective level, by the influence of sin) which necessarily accompany the work of bringing a greater union among the many forces that lie within us and in the world around us.[72]

Because any one individual's lifetime is so short, we cannot hope to see the final victory over evil which will be the result of the total organization and union of the world.[73] A world in genesis, with the direction of an every fuller and better being, is disorganized precisely because of its nature. Otherwise it would be completed and no longer evolving. Obviously, then, a world which had no trace of suffering or evil would be a world already completed and one which had reached its term. The presence of evil was truly insoluble in a static or fixed world because we could always ask why a good God did not create a perfect world.[74] But in an evolving universe, we can begin to appreciate that

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[72] Teilhard proposes three occasions on which sin may have a special effect on human development: (a) "the first faults committed upon earth (committed with minimal consciousness, but with a maximum action upon a psyche just coming to birth; (b) perhaps (if there is, in the matter of liberty, a reaction of the future upon the past) certain final revolts of humanity having come to its maturity (maximum consciousness and responsibility); and finally (c) for each individual, the faults committed in his own social grouping and along a particular line." See "Reflexions sur le péché originel," ms., p. 6, footnote 7.

[73] DM, p. 58 (87, f 89-90).

[74] Teilhard uses the comparison between a tree and a bouquet of flowers. In a bouquet of flowers, we would be surprised to see sickly or faded blooms because each has been picked one by one and assembled with art. They are beautiful, but they are dead, static. The tree, by

God, whose very being is a perfect unity of three-in-one, creates only through a multiplicity, which is participated being, progressively being drawn into union with the unity that marks the divine milieu--both center and environment.

In the midst of a world in which evil and diminishment are inevitable, Teilhard compares our own present efforts to those of a single soldier in battle.[75] We will fall on the field while fighting and before the peace is won. Yet we are assured that through our efforts and even our death a forward progress towards God is continued. Jesus Christ, now risen and in power, makes certain our victory over apparent diminishment and death. His victory is the sign by which all men can come to see God's omnipotence and his universal authority over his creation.

> God, without sparing us the partial deaths, nor the final death, which form an essential part of our lives, transfigures them by integrating them in a better plan--provided we lovingly trust in him.

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contrast, has weathered the storms and overcome its own limitations, so that broken branches and sickly blossoms have their rightful place. They reflect the difficulty and the success in growth and dynamism. A world in growth has immediate consequences for the value of individual human effort and the price of individual human suffering. ". . . if the world really represents a conquest still under way, if at our birth, we are really thrown into the thick of the battle, then we can well understand that, for the success of the universal effort, in which we are at the same time the partners and the stake, pain is inevitable." Cf. HE, "La signification et la valeur constructrice de la souffrance," 1933, pp. 62-63 (Braybrooke, Pilgrim, pp. 24-25).--In contrast to the explanation presented here, we might note that Teilhard's approach to the question of a "more perfect" world was more traditional in an early letter to his cousin. See MM, Oct. 7, 1915, p. 74 (F 91-92).

[75] DM, p. 58 (F 89-90).

> Not only our unavoidable ills but our faults, even our most deliberate ones, can be embraced in that transformation, provided always we repent of them. Not everything is immediately good to those who seek God; but everything is capable of becoming good: *omnia convertuntur in bonum.*[76]

Very carefully Teilhard has tried to lead us to a deeper realization of our finding God even in our diminishments. He does not pretend that we can immediately realize God's presence and our consequent growth in every failure, sickness, or moral evil. First of all, we must admit that failure which follows upon our own laziness or illness which results from our own imprudence cannot directly be interpreted as the will of God.[77] Secondly, in the instances where we face a lessening passivity apart from any personal responsibility, we must still attempt to reach the point of balance between our efforts to grow greater and the resistance to our effort at domination that we meet from outside ourselves.[78] Whether we fall into the first or the second category, the effort of faith is an essential. For God is born in all his luminosity only in so far as we believe that he is to be found in and through this particular diminishment which we are undergoing. At this point, too, diminishment begins to take on more clearly its integral role in personal development.

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[76] *Ibid.*

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 56 (F 87), footnote 2.

[78] *SC*, "My Universe," 1924, p. 73 (F 102).

Growth through Diminishment

In trying to describe the possible phases of transformation by which God makes use of our partial and total deaths, Teilhard turns to analogy with things familiar to us.[79] For example, he points to the sculptor who employs the imperfection of the marble to the enhancement of the whole work.[80] He also suggests that the constant attitude and teaching of the Church with regard to human suffering hints how God enters in through this other "half" of life.[81] From our Christian heritage, we can derive at least three ways in which evil is converted into good. Sometimes a physical disability or a failure can turn us aside from our original business or vocation. At first sight, it would seem to be a tragic disaster. But as a matter of fact, we find our efforts applied to some other task which becomes far more rewarding. In this first way we are talking on the natural level of human values--in other words, more materialistically. Teilhard mentions Job as a person who just on the material level was happier in his final state of restoration than he was in the first state of his prosperity.[82] When we reflect on the second way, we find ourselves through defeat or suffering completely thrown from a more materialistic pursuit to one of much higher spiritual content. Teilhard refers us in generic fashion to the example of many saints' lives and all those people whose outstanding intellectual or beneficient abilities have become apparent only through a tempering ordeal or an ennobling downfall. Even when such a downfall is moral, as in the case of a St. Augustine or a St. Mary Magdalen, the spiritual transformation is such that its success is felt experientially.[83] These are instances when we think in terms of a _felix culpa._

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[79] DM, p. 59 (F 90).

[80] SC, "My Universe," 1924, p. 72 (F 101).

[81] DM, p. 59 (F 90).

[82] Ibid.

In these first two phases we can use our human understanding and appreciate the ways in which God can work. But finally we are faced with diminishments which seem to have no compensating factors. Their number is wide and varied, including complete mental disorders, foolish accidents which incapacitate, and death in the prime of one's life. To our view, such occurrences do not seem to move a man upward and forward, but rather he is severely impaired or else completely leveled by death. Yet at this very point, Teilhard proposes that we come upon the most effective and divinizing of God's actions.[84] God builds most directly a union through the diminishment which seems most totally a loss to us. Uniting oneself, Teilhard reminds us, always mean a going forth from oneself and a partial dying in that which one loves. If we are convinced by the pattern which we have found in evolution which has shown that the "annihilation in the other must be the more complete the more we attach ourselves to something greater than ourselves, then we cannot set limits to the sacrifice required of us on our journey to God."[85] For the man of faith the effect of such a breakdown in self-regard is directed to an automatic broadening of the human perspective.[86] Through such a contact with God, we possess a greater freedom and are energized a little more fully by love.[87] Still the obscurity of God's action in these partial deaths is clarified only by our understanding of total death. For this last stage of diminishment is the critical point, "the one which makes us lose all foothold within ourselves."[88]

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[83] _Ibid._

[84] _Ibid._, pp. 59-60 (F 91-93).

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[85] Ibid., p. 60 (F 93).

[86] Teilhard sees suffering as capable not only of increased personal growth but also furthering the progress of the whole world. "In the entity formed by mankind as a whole, and subordinate to Christ in the 'mystical body,' there are, as Saint Paul tells us, different functions, different members. What member can we conceive to be more specially charged with sublimating and spiritualizing the labor of progress and conquest? The contemplatives and those who pray, no doubt. But also, very certainly, the sick and the suffering. By their nature, by their complexion, the sufferers find themselves as it were driven out of themselves, forced to emigrate from the present forms of life. Are they not therefore, by that very fact, predestined and elected for the task of elevating the world above and beyond immediate enjoyment toward an ever more lofty light? It is their part to tend toward the divine more explicitly and with greater purity than the rest. It is their part to give breath to their brothers who labor like miners in the depths of matter. Thus it is exactly those who bear in their enfeebled bodies the weight of the moving world, who find themselves, by the just dispensation of providence, the most active factors in that very progress which seems to sacrifice and shatter them." HE, "La signification et la valeur constructrice de la souffrance," 1933, p. 64. (Braybrooke, Pilgrim, p. 25).

[87] ". . . here is where there comes in, in an irreplaceable role, the astonishing Christian revelation of a suffering transformable (provided that it is well accepted) as an expression of love and as a principle of union. Suffering is first treated as an adversary which it is a matter to defeat; suffering vigorously fought up to the end; and

Death is unavoidable, the final defeat for every living creature as it falls back into an apparently incurable multiplicity. The whole evolutionary drive has been a fight towards greater unity in and through complexity and consciousness. Men, too, consciously try to perfect and prolong their lives, though they remain without hope of a personal and immediate victory. They only delay the inevitable. In this context, we see why the Resurrection takes on such central importance for mankind and the whole of evolution. For a Christian, the final stage of passion--a death we must undergo--has been turned into a life-giving factor.[89] God broke into his evolution by becoming an incarnate element in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ, through his death and resurrection, has transformed death experientially. In his openness to the will of his Father, even to a death on a cross, Jesus revealed the breakdown in death as truly a breakthrough of God's penetration. According to St.

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nevertheless, at the same time, suffering rationally and cordially received in the measure to which, in snatching us from our egoism and in compensating for our faults, it is capable of sur-centering us upon God. . . . A growth of spirit born from a falling back of matter. Yes, truly a miracle, constantly renewed for two thousand years, of a possible Christification of suffering." AE, "L'énergie spirituelle de la souffrance," 1951, p. 257.

[88] DM, p. 60 (F 93).

[89] Ibid., p. 61 (F 94).

Paul, he was "designated Son of God in power . . . by his resurrection from the dead."[90] Teilhard reflects, then, that "the function of death is to provide the necessary entrance into our inmost selves."[91] God must so re-cast us that its concrete expression lies in the total molecular disintegration of death. After Christ, death and all the seemingly empty sufferings that lead up to it have taken on a wholly new appearance.[92] What had been a return to bits and pieces has instead become the necessary entrance-way to fullness and union with God, the supreme personal. As a man of faith develops, his acceptance of diminishments no longer is passive or despairing, but these lessenings in their inevitable stage are passionately welcomed.[93] He is no longer content to posit an external will of God as the reason for his passivities. Now he views sufferings themselves as further points of contact with God in the process of a depersonalization, which leads only to greater personalization.[94] Teilhard himself expressed this idea in a prayer-petition that he would no longer be satisfied to die while communicating but rather death itself would be a communion.[95]

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[90] Romans 1:4.

[91] DM, p. 61 (F 94).

[92] Teilhard admits that his cosmic view has given a different orientation to ordinary Christian ascetical teaching. On a loose sheet attached to the manuscript notebook of his essay, "Cosmic Life," he distinguished a Cross which is more the symbol of the arduous labor of evolution than the symbol of expiation and reparation for sin. He notes that a reconciliation between his own view and tradition is possible, especially if expiation coincides with the work and effort required of men-in-evolution. See WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, pp. 70-71 (F 60-61).

[93] Teilhard explains that through Christian love, the suffering of failure and diminishment "transformed into the factor of unitive excentration (I want to say from the gift and from the 'passage' into an Other greater than self) cease to appear as a waste of creation in order to become, by a marvel of spiritual energy, a positive factor of sur-evolution: the supreme and true solution to the problem of evil." See "Comment je vois," 1948, ms., p. 24.

Christian Resignation[96]

What does it mean, then, to talk of Christian resignation? Can a submission to the will of God be a legitimate and human value? Teilhard is convinced that all men would better appreciate resignation if they saw it practiced in the active way in which he proposes. Resignation is not meant to be a passivity in the face of evil, a submissiveness that marks a defeatist attitude or at times, perhaps, even a "perverse cultivation of suffering and diminishment."[97] The active meaning of Christian resignation must always begin with the struggle against any lessening of our person. We as Christians are joined with all men in the fight to use all our potentialities to overcome evil and limitation. We are more passionately involved even in this first phase because of our conviction that we are preparing a world for its consummation in Christ. When we find ourselves being defeated and losing the battle even to the point of our own death, we Christians have a totally new and different hope to extend to and share with the rest of mankind. Because we see our very development towards union with God entails diminishment, we welcome the inevitable even in the midst of our struggle.[98] Experientially, everything may seem lost. But by our faith in Christ and his experience of resurrection, we are made fully aware of a new dimension in which God literally turns evil into good, death into life. The dissolution and excentration required are in complete coherence with the other "leaps" of evolution as new levels were reached in life and thought. Because union does differentiate, the Christian remains all the more convinced that his fullest personal development can be achieved only through diminishments, leading ultimately to death. It is death which breaks him out of his limited personal center in order to reach a fuller personal development in being joined to a supreme personal. Christian resignation, then, is the thrust which moves a man toward this goal of fuller and better being.

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[94] For a Teilhardian inspired development of the theme of death as an integral part in the fulfillment of the person, see the psychological study by Ignace Lepp, Death and Its Mysteries (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

[95] DM, p. 63 (F 96).

[96] Unless otherwise specified, the ideas in this section are an interpretation of DM, pp. 63-66 (F 96-100).

[97] DM, p. 63 (F 97).

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[98] "In us men heart-rending suffering and exasperating longing have been implanted as a summons that incessantly calls us to a more perfect unity." WTW, "The Struggle against the Multitude," 1917, p. 102 (F 120).

When we speak of submitting to the will of God, Teilhard warns us of two mistaken interpretations. One is the attitude that every diminishment is experientially a direct encounter with God, even though it may be one's own fault or negligence. Though a second interpretation does not look for an experience of God in diminishment itself, still it is manifested in a totally passive attitude which mistakenly suffers diminishment as an automatic preparation for communicating with God. In Teilhard's eyes, a Christian can only say resignedly "this is the will of God for me" after his strength is spent. It is again a point of balance of straining with all our might for ordinary human betterment counteracted by external or internal forces that hold us back or even overwhelm us. Teilhard remains convinced that unless we do everything we can to advance our development or to resist diminishment, we cannot hope to be at that required point where we open ourselves to God as much as we are able or as much as he desires. Just as we were led to see that the passivities of growth must be employed in our Christian development, so too the passivities of diminishment are measured in terms of growth only when we remain faithful to our human task of advancement. Then Christian resignation takes its rightful place as a form of communion with God.

Renunciation and Sacrifice[99]

Almost by way of an afterthought does Teilhard take note of two related phenomena that are a part of our Christian heritage. We are aware of a dedicated life within the Church which is expressed in the religious vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. This way of life is freely sought out and represents a self-imposed restriction or diminishment. Teilhard grants that such a life can be and has been led before and even now outside Christianity. According to Teilhard, such a life is not justified by the pursuit of a simply defined higher good, a good on the level of human values. But before and apart from Christ, this way of life does represent the beginnings of a leap over the threshold of normal human action. It was only upon the entrance of the Christ-element into the stream of evolution that we receive a clear authentication for this human aspiration. While a life of dedicated renunciation is now generally valid because of our goal of incorporation into the Universal Christ, still there must be present the individual vocation to this way of life for it to be a true personal development.

A second phenomenon in our Christian life is the self-imposed penances such as fastings, beatings, and other various bodily deprivations. In light of our Christian history, Teilhard points out that here again (and perhaps even more clearly than for the dedicated life) the initiative should come from God. Just as every good athlete goes into training through types of self-imposed penances, so Teilhard agrees that to organize our energies or to free ourselves from any domination or dependence, we oftentimes can and should make use of sacrifice and penance. A man can and should sacrifice himself for a higher or greater cause, like the support of his family or the defense of his country. But clearly no man has the right to strive for diminishments just for the sake of diminishment. The Church has always condemned, for example, a bodily mutilation even when it might be conceived as a liberating spiritual good. The natural law of a better and fuller life, which is exhibited in the movement of evolution, must be in conformity with the normal aspirations of our present life. That alone, according to Teilhard, is our concern. "The rest belongs to the wisdom of Him who alone can bring forth another life from every form of death."[100]

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[99] Unless otherwise specified, the ideas in this section are an interpretation of DM, pp. 72-73 (F 109-11).

In the Teilhardian perspective, little deaths or diminishments ordinarily flow readily enough into our lives, and death itself comes upon us quickly. There is no need for us to be wildly impatient, he advises us, or to try to hasten the time.[101] When God enters into us

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[100] DM, p. 73 (F 111).

[101] Teilhard would be in complete agreement with Dag Hammarskjold's summation: "Do not seek death, death will find you. But seek the road which makes death a fulfillment." Markings (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 136.

"to destroy, as it seems, the virtues and forces that we have distilled with so much loving care out of the sap of the world, it will be as a loving fire to consummate our completion in union."[102] Our diminishments will be completed, for our development is now fully realized.

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[102] DM, p. 73 (F 111).

CHAPTER IV

A PERSONAL WITNESS

> "He must increase, but I must decrease."
> John 3:30

Above all else, Teilhard wanted to be known as a phenomenologist. By that term, he meant to include all the experiences that can be observed by man--from the most measurable to the most reflective. When he himself wrote of the personal development of man, he was not only proposing a theory from external observation and inference, but he also included the reflection which he made upon his own personal life. To gain a deeper appreciation of his understanding of the phenomenon of detachment and diminishment, we will now review the facts of his life and his personal reflections recorded in his letters about his own experience. His prayers, too, will be an aid to an appreciation of his understanding of God's influence.

His Life

In the French province of Auvergne, Marie-Joseph Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was born on May 1, 1881--the fourth of eleven children.[1] Marielle had died in infancy before the birth of Pierre. Except for this misfortune, the Teilhard family life seems to have been a full and happy one, with summers spent at Murol or Sarcenat, and the winters at Clermont-Ferrand. Pierre was sent off to the Jesuit boarding school of Notre Dame de Mongré in Villefranche-sur-Saône at the age of eleven. From 1892 to 1897 he took his schooling there, doing quite well but not brilliantly. It was at the age of sixteen that he first expressed his desire to enter the Society of Jesus.

> You will perhaps be surprised at not having heard from me sooner. The reason is that before writing to you I wanted to have another word with Père Desribes. I must tell you first of all that nothing is completely decided. At the same time (and those I've consulted agree with me) it does seem to me as though God is offering me a vocation to leave the world. You can well imagine that once I'm certain that I'm not mistaken, I shall answer the call; and I know, too, that you will be the last to raise any difficulties. All I now need is for our Lord to make me feel unmistakably what he wants of me and to give me the generosity of spirit that is needed.[2]

What appeared in prospect to a young man as a "leaving the world" becomes for the priest a vocation to be the "first to become aware of what the world loves, pursues, suffers."[3] Although his idea of his religious vocation took on this different aspect, he remained constant throughout his life to his cautious seeking out of counsel. In all his own doubts and trials we find him turning to human as well as divine support. Even though his writings--except for the strictly scientific ones--were never allowed to receive the open criticism coming from publication, still Teilhard always sent them out to his friends for their appraisal.[4] In general, then, this trait of being open to the counsel of others remains with him through the years and is one of the strengths of his character. He also remains convinced that God has his ways and his times of making known his will for our lives [illegible]

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[1] "The addition of Chardin to the family name came from his grandfather, Pierre-Cirice Teilhard, who in 1841 had married Victoire Barron de Chardin." Cuénot, Teilhard, p. 1.

[2] Letter to his parents, June 4, 1897, Album, p. 20.

[3] WTW, "The Priest," 1918, p. 222 (F 301).

Two years later, [illegible]hard entered the novitiate at Aix-en-Provence. [illegible]ber him as a "big fellow," friendly an[illegible]e 'gentlemen,' " and--what will be essentia[illegible]xpeditions--a "great walker."[6] Teilhard to[illegible]al on March 25, 1901. His doubts and trials we find him turning to human as well as divine support. Even though his writings--except for the strictly scientific ones--were never allowed to receive the open criticism coming from publication, still Teilhard always sent them out to his friends for their appraisal.[4] In general, then, this trait of being open to the counsel of others remains with him through the years and is one of the strengths of his character. He also remains convinced that God has his ways and his times of making known his will for our lives.

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[4] "Fr. Teilhard often asked others for their opinion and criticism, just as he has done here with Maurice Blondel. He also wrote a number of short personal essays to 'lighten the task of criticism and reorientation for those whose right it is to guide me.' (1918) 'My one wish to be advised' (1933), etc." Correspondence, Ch. 7, pp. 119-20, footnote 26. J. Maritian, The Peasant of the Garonne, p. 138, is overly harsh on Teilhard about the isolation in which he carried out his research and wrote, especially in view of the many scientific team-expeditions in which Teilhard participated, and the criticism and advice of his friends which he sought out.

[5] Teilhard explained his vocation in this comment: "It was a desire for the most perfect that determined my vocation as a Jesuit." Album, p. 20.

[6] Album, p. 25. Various quotes taken from unpublished biography by Barjon.

Two years later, on March 20, 1899 Teilhard entered the novitiate at Aix-en-Provence.[5] His fellow-novices remember him as a "big fellow," friendly and good-natured, "very much the 'gentlemen,' " and--what will be essential for all his later scientific expeditions--a "great walker."[6] Teilhard took his first vows at Laval on March 25, 1901. His letter to his parents on that day bubbles over with an exuberant joy.

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[4] "Fr. Teilhard often asked others for their opinion and criticism, just as he has done here with Maurice Blondel. He also wrote a number of short personal essays to 'lighten the task of criticism and reorientation for those whose right it is to guide me.' (1918) 'My one wish to be advised' (1933), etc." Correspondence, Ch. 7, pp. 119-20, footnote 26. J. Maritian, The Peasant of the Garonne, p. 138, is overly harsh on Teilhard about the isolation in which he carried out his research and wrote, especially in view of the many scientific team-expeditions in which Teilhard participated, and the criticism and advice of his friends which he sought out.

[5] Teilhard explained his vocation in this comment: "It was a desire for the most perfect that determined my vocation as a Jesuit." Album, p. 20.

[6] Album, p. 25. Various quotes taken from unpublished biography by Barjon.

> At last I'm a Jesuit: I haven't time to write much today but I want you to know just how happy I am that at last I belong entirely, through the Blessed Virgin, to the Sacred Heart. If only you know the joy I feel now that I have at last given myself completely and forever to the Society, particularly at a time when it is being persecuted. I prayed a great deal for all of you today, and I am sure that our Lord will never forget all you have done to assist my vocation. But you must always pray for me too, so that I can measure up to what God asks of me.[7]

Once again a number of themes which remain constant throughout Teilhard's life are apparent. Even though the Jesuit novitiate lasts but two years, he shows the impatience which will ever be his in the pursuit of a goal. His reference to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he always remained devoted, will later be extended to the notion of the "eternal feminine" and its essential importance in the development of ourselves and our world.[8] The Sacred Heart embodies the whole Christic orientation of his world-view--the heart being a fiery furnace (foyer) from which center the flames leap out and engulf the world. Teilhard is happy to identify himself with the Jesuits at the very time when their kind of religious life was in disfavor with official France. In a similar way, he continued to identify with ideals and causes which during his own lifetime were never to meet official favor in the Church.[9] It was at this point where Teilhard's detachment and his acceptance of diminishment most brilliantly shine out. Just as he was always aware of the necessity of advice from others, so he expresses frequently the need for others' prayers and their assistance to him in order that he might fulfill his vocation. At the same time, he always acknowledges his own responsibility and desire to pray for others that God might give them assistance beyond the human help he could offer. These are some of the features which will remain and deepen throughout the personal development of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

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[7] Letter to his parents, March 25, 1901, Album, p. 25.

[8] Cuénot notes that Teilhard frequently associates the three feminines: Mary, the Church, and the Society of Jesus. Mary was always to hold a special place in his thoughts, prayers, and retreats. Cf. Teilhard, p. 5. H. de Lubac, L'éternel féminin, p. 196, notes that it is not an abstract principle of the "eternal feminine" which is personified in the Virgin Mary, but it is the Virgin existing in her own singularity which is universalized in this principle.

In the summer of 1901, the Jesuits moved the juniorate (a two-year period of college studies) to the Channel island of Jersey. A fresh wave of anti-clericalism swept through the government of France and further laws had been passed directed against religious orders. Teilhard, then, had a taste of exile very early in his career. During this period at Jersey, he seriously considered giving up his passionate interest in petrology. Perhaps just from the pressure of the times, he felt that it was more necessary to devote his whole life to "what are called 'supernatural' activities."[10] As usual, he sought out advice--

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[9] Tresmontant, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, p. 82, points out that Teilhard experienced the schism between the modern world and the Church at its most serious moment, i.e. at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the present century.

[10] "Le coeur de la matière," 1950, ms., p. 24.

this time from Father Troussard, a spiritual father and novice-master. By the counsel he gave, Father Troussard began a lifetime project for Teilhard, for he pointed out that the God of the Cross looked as much for natural development of oneself as for one's sanctification. Teilhard would take up the quest for the why and the how of this coherence of personal and saintly growth, not only for his own life but also for the men of his time. The more immediate reaction of Teilhard, however, was to be put at ease in his love for rocks and for matter.

About the same time as this interior trial beset Teilhard, his own family at Sarcenat suffered some serious setbacks.[11] On September 27, 1902, Albéric, a naval officer and the eldest of the children, died at Sarcenat. Shortly thereafter, Marguerite-Marie, the sister next-in-age after Teilhard, developed pleurisy and became permanently bedridden. Then in August, 1904, his sister Louise died of meningitis at the age of twelve. One year later, Teilhard himself experienced a further separation from his family, when he was assigned to teach physics and chemistry at the Jesuit College of the Holy Family in Cairo, Egypt. The letters during the next three-year period of his teaching in Egypt mirror his continued concern for his family, with a special awareness of his mother's worry about his own good health. Each time he closes the letter with a simply expressed affectionate kiss or embrace and quite often a prayer. Despite the busy activity of teaching and his own amateur scientific expeditions to the Egyptian countryside, he demonstrates a certain impatience to move on in his Jesuit training. In 1906, he writes that "my fate depends essentially on a 'replacement.' "[12] And a little more desperately he confesses on June 26, 1908, "I dare not tell you to hope."[13] A month later he admits that he will be happy to see the uncertainty of his future removed.[14] Shortly thereafter, Teilhard finally learns that he is being advanced to theology studies at Ore Place in Hastings, England.

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[11] These tragedies of the Teilhard family are recorded in Album, pp. 28-29 and in Speaight, Life, p. 32.

Teilhard will remain at Hastings for four years, from 1908 to 1912.[15] Only two months before his ordination to the priesthood, tragedy struck the family with the death of his sister Francoise.[16] She had been the superior of the convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Shanghai, China. There she died of smallpox at the age of thirty-two. In a picture of the family taken at the time of their visit to Hastings for Teilhard's ordination on August 24, 1911, the black mourning bands are still in evidence.[17] Teilhard's own reaction to his ordination is well expressed in a letter written some months previous. "When you make your vows, you have rather the impression of offering yourself; when you receive the grace of ordination, you should feel above all else that someone is taking hold of you."[18]

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[12] Egypt, January 18, 1907, p. 144 (F 158).

[13] Egypt, June 26, 1908, p. 252 (F 280).

[14] Egypt, July 19, 1908, p. 253 (F 283).

[15] Teilhard gradually took quite an interest in theology as is shown in this letter, dated April 23, 1910: "Theology makes one think of many things, and I am beginning to see that there are so many other questions, less agreeable, perhaps, but more vital than the sciences, that I wonder whether I shall not leave science aside some day or other--unless I am told to stick to it--which is very possible." Hastings, p. 92 (F 141).

[16] An indication of Francoise's piety is shown in this prayer: "Heart of Jesus, give me a heart that is filled with ardor and generosity, that thrills with joy when sacrifices have to be made; a heart whose zeal knows neither fatigue nor obstacle; a heart whose only love is your heart, and whose only knowledge is your name." Album, p. 42. The prayer and expression of piety is very similar to Teilhard's.

In October, 1912, Teilhard moved to Paris to study under Marcellin Boule, professor of palaeontology, at the Museum of Natural History. There he remained, except for various geological field trips, until he began a final year of spiritual training--called tertianship--at Canterbury, England in August, 1914.[19] Quickly the tragedy of war took a family toll in the death of his brother Gonzague, killed in action on November 12, 1914. One month later, Teilhard was activated as a stretcher-bearer in the medical corps.

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[17] Album, p. 43.

[18] Hastings, March 19, 1911, p. 139 (F 222).

[19] Teilhard always remained grateful for his Jesuit training. In a letter to Auguste Valensin, he wrote: "The marvelous training I received at the Society . . . ended by making me desire one thing alone, another existence, further along the same line. Is this a disappointment? Or a blessing? Or is it merely the law of all growth?" Correspondence, p. 131.

The war years from 1914 to 1918 have been called the crucible of his genius.[20] It was this time when he worked through and synthesized the fundamental problem of his life: "how to reconcile progress and detachment, a passionate and legitimate love of the earth's highest development and the exclusive quest for the kingdom of heaven."[21] The war period saw the blossoming of the deep and loving friendship of Teilhard and his cousin, Marguerite Teillard-Chambon.[22] Their correspondence provides an invaluable setting and oftentimes commentary for his early essays. While he was busy with thoughts about the cosmic life and the mystical milieu, he was at the same time being cited for his outstanding work as a stretcher-bearer. On August 29, 1915, he is praised for displaying the "greatest self-sacrifice and contempt for danger"; on September 17, 1916 he is called a "model of bravery, self-sacrifice, and coolness."[23] He was awarded the Médaille Militaire on

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[20] Album, p. 54. In MM, Oct. 11, 1918, pp. 245-46 (F 320), Teilhard admits: "The effect of the war on my own personal fortunes will have been to give me a faith. Until now, zeal has always been for me something artificial, applied from outside one, something forced. Now I can understand a little what sort of passion it was that inspired the apostles. But it's most remarkable that this feeling began to rise in me only when religion became illuminated (was given life) for me, by a 'personal' way of looking at things, a 'personal' taste."

[21] Letter to Victor Fontoynont, March 15, 1916, Album, p. 54.

[22] Teilhard wrote to his cousin: "You were given me for the war." And then he went on to compare their friendship to a note of music which gives a tone to their whole life. MM, Feb. 12, 1919, p. 282 (F 369). Cf. Speaight, Life, p. 74.

[23] Album, p. 55. Cf. Speaight, Life, p. 63.

June 20, 1917 for his rescue of a wounded man while under heavy bombardment. Although he had occasion to become a full-time chaplain, Teilhard refused on the grounds that he would do more good among the men in the ranks. We often can forget that Teilhard's great optimism and faith in humanity was tempered by the horror and destruction of the First World War. In a letter to his fellow-Jesuit, Victor Fontoynont, Teilhard observes that "these thirty months have been like a long retreat. I have become at the same time very mystical and very realistic."[24] The Teilhard family lost another member when Olivier died of his wounds while fighting at Mount Kemmel on May 3, 1918. In this same month, Teilhard received word that he could make his solemn final profession in the Society of Jesus.[25] His reflection on this renewed and final dedication of his life in religion is expressed in the essay, "The Priest." He thanks God for making him a priest "ordained for War."[26]

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[24] Letter to Victor Fontoynont, July 27, 1917, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 67.

[25] Even Teilhard's final vows were a point of dispute. As Robert Speaight records, "Teilhard had ideas about the immanence of God in the universe which caused the more conventionally orthodox to shake their heads. It was not surprising, therefore, that when he came to take his solemn vows at Sainte Foy-lès-Lyon in May, 1918, Père Chanteur, the Lyon provincial, nervous of his pantheist leanings, should have been opposed to his doing so. Fortunately, another Jesuit priest of recognized spiritual discernment, Père Vulliez-Serment, vouched for his solidity. It is never quite impossible for a Jesuit to leave the Society, but the solemn vows represent a final stage of mature and mutual commitment." Speaight, Life, p. 76.

[26] WTW, "The Priest," 1918, p. 223 (F 302).

> Happy are those among us who, in these decisive days of the creation and redemption, have been chosen for the supreme act, the logical crowning of their priesthood: to be in communion, even unto death, with the Christ who is being born and suffering in the human race.[27]

After the War, Teilhard became involved in studies leading to his doctorate in geology at the Institut Catholique. He then began to teach at the Institut as an assistant professor of geology.[28] A year later he made his first expedition into China as part of a French scientific team headed by the Jesuit Father Émile Licent. When he returned to France in September, 1924, he resumed his teaching duties. But on the thirteenth of November, Teilhard's teaching duties were brought to a sudden halt by his recall to Lyons, the residence of his provincial superior. Two years previously, he had written a proposal on different ways of interpreting original sin at the request of a professor of dogmatic theology. Somehow a copy of the paper found its way to Rome and the ever-watchful eye of Cardinal Merry del Val, at that time Secretary of the Holy Office. Because of the Cardinal's sharp representations made to Father Ledochowski, the Jesuit General, Teilhard was requested finally to subscribe to six propositions.[29] Relying on the counsel of friends and superiors, though still with a certain reluctance, Teilhard signed the formulas. Along with the scholastic abdication, he also had to accept a physical exile from the Paris he loved to a China which was to become his home for over twenty years. It was a very serious crisis for both his intellectual and his spiritual life. Only a year or so later, he began planning his spiritual testament, The Divine Milieu.[30]

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[27] WTW, "The Priest," 1918, p. 224 (F 302).

[28] Even in his early teaching days, Teilhard had the desire to do more. In a letter to Auguste Valensin on Holy Saturday, 1922, he exclaims, "if I could only play some small role in this great cause--the only one which speaks to the depths of my being--that of the explicit fusion of Christian life with the 'natural' sap of the universe." Cf. Correspondence, Ch. 4, p. 96, footnote 40.

[29] See Speaight, Life, pp. 136-37.

> I think that if I could manage to get it printed, it would do good in two ways: it would spread ideas which I believe might open new frontiers for many minds, and at the same time my efforts might be rewarded by some sort of approval from the Church. I have settled down to my little book. I want to write it slowly, quietly--living it and meditating on it like a prayer.[31]

This book, which Teilhard looked back on as "better balanced perhaps than anything I have ever written,"[32] could not overcome the opposition from Roman censorship. The University of Louvain wanted to include it within its series Museum Lessianum, but despite the repeated interventions of the Jesuit theologian Pierre Charles for over a four-year period, the book continued to flounder unpublished because of ecclesiastical snags. It was another disappointment for Teilhard, and just how difficult it was to accept is reflected in his own description of The Divine Milieu as "a mouthful of bread, more or less well-baked, thrown to the mass of Christians perishing of cold and hunger in a dehumanized Church."[33]

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[30] Speaight, Life, p. 192, describes Teilhard as sketching out "a new, and subtly transformed, spirituality in which adoration would consist in devotion to the creative act; charity in devotion to the general advancement of mankind; chastity in the sublimation rather than the suppression of the flesh; detachment in the very intensity of one's attachment to beauty and truth; resignation only in the last convulsions of one's struggle with the angel; communion with God through communion with the world."

[31] LT, Nov. 7, 1926, p. 91. For an earlier expression of the same conviction, see MM, Feb. 22, 1919, p. 286 (F 374-75).

[32] Letter to Madame Haardt, Easter, 1938, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 146.

The years in China were broken up by six trips back to France, an equal number of lecture or organization trips to the United States, and scientific expeditions to Africa, India, Java, Ceylon, and Burma. His scientific fame was heightened through his association with the discovery of the Sinanthropus skull ("Peking man"--an important ancestor of man) in late 1929. Death continued to take its toll of his family: his father in February, 1932, his brother Victor in October, 1934, his mother in February, 1936, and his invalid sister, Marguerite-Marie in August, 1936. The distance-separation made every family death that much harder to bear.

In March, 1937, while attending a Congress on human origins sponsored by the Carnegie Institute in Philadelphia, Teilhard was awarded the Gregor Mendel Medal by Villanova University (at that time College) in recognition of his contributions to science. On this same trip to the United States, he was scheduled to receive an honorary degree from the Jesuit Boston College. But after a New York Times interview printed a somewhat too provocative approach to Teilhard's views about evolution, and this was compounded by a later Canadian paper interview, Boston College withdrew its proposed degree-granting. This was just another painful reminder to Teilhard of the ever-present suspicion with which he was viewed in his Church and in his own Order. By contrast, however, he did receive further recognition--this time by his own countrymen--when he was appointed to the Institut de Paleontologie Humaine at the Sorbonne. Although Teilhard saw the post as chiefly nominal and honorific, he was almost frustrated again when Roman authorities took over eight months to decide if he would be permitted to accept. In the end they were forced to recognize a fait accompli when the Sorbonne went ahead and publicly announced the appointment.[34]

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[33] Letter to Fr. Décisier, February 6, 1948, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 146.

After a rather brief trip back to France in late 1938, Teilhard returned to China where he was isolated for the course of the Second World War.[35] He finished his major work, The Phenomenon of Man, in June, 1940. After submitting the manuscript to Roman censorship, he had to wait for three years before he received word that he had been refused permission to publish it. After the war, he continued the fight for its publication; but in spite of the corrections which he made at the insistence of censors and a special trip to Rome in 1948, he was never to see The Phenomenon of Man or any major writing of his (except for purely scientific articles) published during his lifetime.

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[34] See Speaight, Life, p. 243. Some years later, Teilhard reflects on honor and personal distinction: "I had the impression to be stronger and freer being nothing, and having nothing. A super-form of pride, probably; but also the disgust to see so many people hunting for 'distinction,' instead of giving their life to a bigger life." TF, Aug. 6, 1947, p. 176.

[35] Teilhard sums up his wartime life in China in simple fashion: "Throughout the war, I led a bourgeois existence in Peking, where I landed in August, 1939, and where I found myself definitely 'trapped' at the moment of Pearl Harbor. . . . Apart from . . . a single trip into the hills behind Chinwangtao, I was not able to budge from Peking and had to turn my thoughts in on myself. With the result that notable progress was made in my ideas in the philosophico-religious realm--for which, as you know, I have always had a weakness--something of great value to me here, as I shall tell you." Letter to George Barbour, Feb. 20, 1947, in G. Barbour, In the Field with Teilhard de Chardin (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), p. 113.

When Teilhard finally returned to France in May, 1946, his brother Gabriel had been dead almost five years. Teilhard's own reputation had spread during the war years through the continued circulation of various manuscripts which he had sent back for his friends' advice and criticism. Along with the growth of his fame in France, the opposition to him also increased. The opportunity of a South African expedition in 1947 appeared inviting, but a severe heart attack in June incapacitated him for most of the year. At the same time as the occurrence of the heart attack, Teilhard was cited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and promoted to the rank of Officer of the Legion of Honor,

> for outstanding services to the intellectual and scientific influence of France, through a body of work mostly written and published in China, which has established him as a leading authority in international, and particularly in English-speaking scientific circles. He may now be regarded, in the fields of palaeontology and geology, as one of the chief ornaments of French science, whose international standing he has done much, by his personal contacts with foreign scientists, to maintain and exalt.[36]

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[36] Album, p. 176. Cf. Speaight, Life, p. 282.

Two months later, Teilhard was informed that he was forbidden by Rome to publish anything dealing with philosophy or theology. He wrote from his convalescent bed, "All this isn't making life any brighter."[37] Yet upon his recovery, he became director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research. If he could have received permission from his own superiors, he would have been elected to the Chair at the College de France, just vacated by his old friend, Henri Breuil. This opportunity, along with the publication of The Phenomenon of Man, was the subject-matter during his special visit to Rome to see the Jesuit General and other ecclesiastical superiors in October, 1948.[38] The response was negative.

In March, 1949, he was laid low once again, this time by an attack of pleurisy. The following year he again received an honor which Church authorities had no control over when he was elected a non-resident member of the French Académie des Sciences. He finally managed to make two trips to South Africa--one in 1951 and the next two years later. But even these trips were marred by the realization of a hardened opposition to his ideas among Roman authorities, especially since the 1950 publication of Pius XII's encyclical, Humani Generis. For his own freedom from outright condemnation, Teilhard's Jesuit superiors encouraged his exile to New York City where he became a research-assistant for the Wenner-Gren Foundation, which had financed the South African expeditions. Just as China was waiting for him on his first exile from Paris, now he was seventy years old and in his final exile in the United States. He paid one last short visit to France in the summer of 1954.

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[37] Letter to Abbé Breuil, Sept., 23, 1947, Album, p. 178.

[38] About the time of Teilhard's visit to Rome, the following incident is reported: "a friend of Teilhard's, to whom Pius XII had given a private audience, spoke of his influence in Pekin. The Pope listened carefully and then replied: 'I know that Père Teilhard is a great scientist, but he is not a theologian. In one of his essays he speaks of "resolving the problem of God." But for us there is no problem.' " Cf. Speaight, Life, p. 284.

> "I can retain nothing from this too hasty visit to Paris except a mass of more or less chaotic impressions; nevertheless a few clear, or clarified points do stand out.
> 1. That, through all that is most vital in me, I feel that I am more and more dedicated to my vocation of devoting my life--what remains of my life--to the discovery and the service of the Universal Christ.
> 2. That--for the immediate future at least--it is most certainly in shadow and exile that I must work.[39]

In March, 1955, Teilhard completed his final spiritual testament, "Le Christique." In this essay, he expressed that his vision remains the same as it was when he wrote The Divine Milieu. His sole lament stemmed from the fact that no one else seemed to share his vision even though it was so brilliantly clear to him. Yet he remained hopeful that "if the truth appears once, in one single mind, that is enough to ensure that nothing can ever prevent it from spreading to everything and setting it ablaze."[40]

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[39] Letter to Jeanne Mortier, Sept. 22, 1954, Album, p. 206.

[40] "Le Christique," 1955, ms., p. 13.

On Easter Sunday, April 10, 1955, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was seized by a heart attack and died within a short time. As reported by one of his nephews, "to die on the day of the Resurrection" was Teilhard's wish expressed on the occasion of a dinner at the French Consulate just one year earlier.[41] In his death, he remained in exile from his homeland. He was buried in the Jesuit cemetery at the St. Andrew-on-Hudson novitiate in Poughkeepsie, New York. Almost like a planned continuation of the shadow in which he worked and died, his original tombstone was incorrectly inscribed and only later replaced as his posthumous fame grew. But for all the people who cannot spell or pronounce his name,[42] his reputation has grown and the ideas which he advocated have spread, even through official Church documents such as John XXIII's Pacem in Terris and Vatican II's "The Church in the Modern World."

His Letters

In the context, then, of these facts of his life, we will try to observe, through his letters, Teilhard's reactions to the many occasions of detachment, diminishment, and death which arose for him during his lifetime.

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[41] Album, p. 214, Cuénot, Teilhard, p. 386, records that this remark of Teilhard was made just a month previous to his death.

[42] In the preface to C. Tresmontant's Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Gustave Weigel, S.J. suggested that it might not be an impudence to advise the English-speaking reader that "Teilhard" is pronounced "Tay-ahr." (p. v.).

Detachment

The first obvious area where the experience of detachment enters into the life of Teilhard is in his separation from his family. We catch a glimpse of the pain evoked upon leaving his family to enter the Jesuit novitiate when he writes, seven years later, "I should find it difficult to disentangle all the sentiments which that memory evokes."[43] He goes on to say that he would sum up his feelings at that time in a great deal of affection for his family and at the same time a strong gratitude to God for his vocation. He expresses once again his heart-wrenchings at separation, somewhat obliquely, to his parents after his first few weeks in Egypt. "Egypt may not be at the end of the world, but I believe one feels the family's affection here more than ever, and that helps me to pray to our Lord more for you all."[44] In his first Christmas letter from Egypt, Teilhard reflects on all the things that he has to be thankful for from his parents, and then expresses the hope that they will see their children remaining good and grown into their maturity.[45] Since tragedy has already begun to take its toll of the family, it was a wistful hope. Looking back on his visit home right before he left for Egypt, he observes that "those good days will return when the Sacred Heart wills it."[46] The candor with which he acknowledges his affection for his father is apparent in this birthday letter:

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[43] Egypt, March 19, 1906, p. 75 (F 82).

[44] Ibid., Nov. 1, 1905, p. 45 (F 49).

[45] Ibid., Dec. 17, 1905, p. 57 (F 64).

> I need hardly repeat, need I, how much my heart is with you, especially as I realize better the quality of the life you provided for me until I was eighteen. It is those years that have earned me all the rest; and, from another point of view, I doubt that one could be happier on earth than I was during that time. I honestly believe that all of us, your children, can say the same.[47]

It was through the separation from his family, through long periods of time and distance, that Teilhard realized his greater attachment to them only led to a further detachment from them.[48] When his brother Gabriel was moving out of the family circle and the medical mystery of his sister Marguerite-Marie's illness only deepened, Teilhard reasoned that through these sacrifices the whole family was blessed by God "in the manner he pleases."[49] In March, 1908, he looks back upon nine years of separation from his family and remarks that he is convinced that "Our Lord will reunite us more closely in heaven, and the price for this is not too high."[50]

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[46] Ibid., Aug. 9, 1906, pp. 109-10 (F 119).

[47] Ibid., Dec. 22, 1906, p. 138 (F 151).

[48] For example, Egypt, Jan. 25, 1907, pp. 177-78 (F 196); Oct. 31, 1907, p. 200 (F 221).

[49] Egypt, Dec. 6, 1907, p. 206 (F 227).

[50] Ibid., March 27, 1908, p. 233 (F 258).

After he completed his theology studies at Hastings, he was allowed to spend two weeks at home before taking up his studies in Paris. He admits that it doesn't take long to get used to Sarcenat again, but then, "that is no longer where I should be."[51] Frequently in his letters to his family, we find reference to the will of God as "the only thing that counts."[52] He proposes to his father that "God always gives more than a thorn-bush."[53] If everything goes too well within the family, Teilhard observes, there would be a risk of not thinking enough about heaven, and not wanting to leave at all. "Both good and bad come and go and we are left with the future."[54]

Just as his teaching days in Egypt presented various occasions on which Teilhard must leave off from some pleasurable task or take on a new and formidable job, so we find similar indications through his later letters that his priestly life demands these same daily detachments. A typical example would be his occasional assignments to preach--a priestly task at which he never felt comfortable.[55] His impatience to be active in the war effort is shown in his "it makes me sick to have to sit around waiting for my 'call.'"[56] But he quickly adds, "as always, we must obey God's will."[57] When he finally is called up, and separations from family and friends are even more pronounced, he talks about how hearts bleed and yet "that is the price we must pay for Our Lord's entering into us a little further."[58] Mixing with all the loud and dirty and sometimes quite coarse individuals who form an army battalion requires a detachment from all the natural likes and dislikes and a certain environmental class prejudice. Teilhard did not arrive at such detachment easily. He reflects that God came to dwell among coarse men and hopes that God will give him the strength not only to think but to feel the truth of brotherhood--"men whom I shall be the more certain to love in real charity the less I feel I have in common with them."[59]

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[51] Paris, Aug. 23, 1912, p. 19 (F 317).

[52] For example, Paris, Oct. 13, 1912, p. 38 (F 337); Sept. 22, 1913, p. 109 (F 403).

[53] Paris, Dec. 23, 1912, pp. 51-52 (F 351-52).

[54] Ibid.

[55] For example, Egypt, May 15, 1907, p. 170 (F 187); Paris, Feb. 5, 1913, p. 56 (F 356) and March 31, 1914, p. 123 (F 428).

Again it requires a detachment from one's own comfort and consolation to be at the disposition of others who need support. The difficulty is increased when we feel uncertain ourselves, Teilhard writes, and are "much preoccupied with finding something to lean on ourselves."[60] Though devoting even his leisure time to such people is less pleasant and less restful, Teilhard encourages himself with the thought that it is more useful and pleasing to God. In sounding out some of his thoughts with his cousin Marguerite, he asks, "what should we not be able to do, to give up, if we believe in Jesus Christ?"[61]

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[56] Paris, Sept, 11, 1914, p. 153 (F 459).

[57] Ibid. Cf. also Paris, Aug 9, 1914, p. 148 (F 454-55).

[58] MM, Feb. 5, 1915, p. 48 (F 58).

[59] MM, Dec. 24, 1915, p. 85 (F 106).

When one of his early articles on Christ in matter was refused publication by Études, it seemed to give him a presentiment of his writing career. "If the worst comes to the worst, if I die without ever having been heard, I feel confident that I shall have served my purpose."[62] Dying in obscurity because of his obedience may be necessary for anything good in his aspirations to come to fruition. Even during the war, as he looked ahead, he described the future for himself not in terms of depression, but detachment. "This feeling, of course, borders on a sort of sadness (the sadness that accompanies any fundamental change); but it leads also to a sort of higher joy."[63] This kind of higher joy which comes from a growth through detachment is also described in terms of a sense of peace or plentitude "at feeling myself advancing into the unknown, or, more correctly, into what cannot be determined by our own means."[64] Acknowledging a necessary support from prayer and friendship, Teilhard sees his detachment as if "only God were *ahead* and *around*--*thickening* (if I may use the word) as we advance."[65]

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[60] MM, Jan. 12, 1916, pp. 89-90 (F 112).

[61] Ibid., Jan. 22, 1916, pp. 91-92 (F 115).

[62] Ibid., Dec. 23, 1916, pp. 155-56 (F 200-201).

[63] Ibid., Sept. 25, 1917, p. 205 (F 266).

At the time of his discharge from the army, he admits "a certain nervousness as I see the time approaching when there'll be conflicts, frictions, disappointments."[66] He grants, though, that this is the necessary law that governs all effort. "We should have a sense of victory every time that life forces us to master it and to detach ourselves from it."[67] This notion of detachment is Teilhard's first thought as he offers his "Mass on the World" during his first scientific expedition in China. Unknowingly, Teilhard summed up a great deal of his life in exile.

> To take [the bread of the world] is, I know, to surrender myself to forces which will tear me away painfully from myself in order to drive me into danger, into laborious undertakings, into a constant renewal of ideas, into an austere detachment where my affections are concerned.[68]

Even though the theory was full-blown from reflection upon individual experiences, Teilhard still found himself asking, "does the ageing of our bodies necessarily bring a detachment of the soul as a natural accompaniment? Perhaps."[69] His exile in China never dimmed his attachment for France and his love for friends and causes in his native country.[70] But the great distance and his own long-term expeditions made for extended silences from his friends, which he always found very difficult to accept.[71] The separation from friends in France was intensified when friendship with his fellow countryman and Jesuit, Émile Licent--with whom he had to work most closely for a good part of his time in China--proved to be impossible. This personality conflict, which Teilhard described as "something implacable and uncontrollable about it," provided only one more occasion when Teilhard had to recognize the inevitable despite his efforts.[72]

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[64] *MM*, Oct. 4, 1917, p. 207 (F 269).

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1919, p. 273 (F 356).

[67] *Ibid.*, Sept. 5, 1919, p. 305 (F 400).

[68] *HU*, "The Mass on the World," 1923, p. 30 (F 29).

In a more poetic mood, Teilhard sees detachment in terms of each of us being a little like a star for the other--"by the presence as much as by the absence."[73] Teilhard began to see his life in exile as a call and a benediction--the world being saved by those "who have no place to lay their heads."[74] He expresses a prayerful wish that God may allow him to die ("metaphorically at least")[75] at the side of the road. When his mother and sister die within the same year, he feels once more the pangs of being so far away. "But I can see quite clearly that it would be a betrayal on my part not to take up my staff again and accept the routine of perpetual separations."[76] Separation truly was a routine in the life of Teilhard, and it plays an essential role in his own witness to personal development.

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[69] LT, April 26, 1926, p. 81.

[70] For example, TF, March 24, 1927, p. 65; July 24, 1927, p. 77.

[71] Zanta, Aug. 23, 1929, p. 96 (F 102).

[72] Letter to Auguste Valensin, Dec. 30, 1929, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 173.

[73] Letter to Lucille Swan, Jan. 1935, "Memories and Letters" in Braybrooke, Pilgrim, pp. 42-43.

[74] TF, Sept. 13, 1935, p. 88. The same lines can also be found in a letter to Père d'Ouince in 1939, cited in Speaight, Life, pp. 324-25.

Diminishment

We have seen that there are two kinds of passivities: passivities of growth and passivities of diminishment. In the first category, Teilhard testifies in his letters to various limitations which he has to accept and work with in order to grow. It might be the simple acknowledgement that he has little or no poetic or musical abilities when he would sorely like to use these media to express better his cosmic vision.[77] More poignantly he feels the passivities of growth in his inability to return the love of certain people "by whom you're loved most touchingly and whom you want with all your power to love."[78] Somehow he could not find an empathy within himself which would allow him to respond in kind. The exquisite pain caused by this state is only relieved, so he finds, by turning to Jesus Christ, the center of all hearts, and bowing before the inexorable law of providence. We should note, however, that what potential of sympathy and love he had, he used to his best ability as is demonstrated in the widely varied circles of friends that he made. Another instance of this kind of passivity lies in his reference to the "nervous condition" which has been his since childhood.[79] What Teilhard describes as a kind of mental dizziness and anxiety is called "psychasthenia" ("told me with a smile") by the best Peking clinician.[80] He acknowledges that the best remedy is to continue busy "as if nothing happened."[81] And so this nervous condition, which Teilhard admits can be very unpleasant at times, is used as a goad to further activity. More important than this picture of Teilhard in some of his passivities of growth is our view of him as he faces the passivities of diminishment.

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Letter to Joseph Teilhard de Chardin, Sept. 5, 1936, Album, p. 140.

[77] TF, Oct. 12, 1926, pp. 43-44; and June 28, 1937, p. 94.

[78] MM, Feb. 5, 1917, p. 180 (F 233).

Diminishments--all those things which Teilhard must accept and which make him less--include the early harshness towards others and contempt for the less educated which rise up in his within and for which he repents.[82] The remedy for this, he proposes to himself, is to seek after kindness and gentleness--the first source of strength and "first, also, perhaps, of the visible virtues."[83] From the circumstances of the war--a part of the without, he is deprived often of offering Mass, and regrets that even mentally he too infrequently and neglectfully makes up for it by offering himself and seeking a closer union with God.[84] Yet Teilhard confesses that he often says to God "I give myself to you, I wish to unite myself to you."[85] Even though he says this sincerely, he humbly asks himself whether he does not forget that it is God alone who can give himself and raise a being to some small degree of union with himself. How much he has to allow God's entrance into himself through the acceptance of apparent disaster continues to make its impression on Teilhard throughout the events of wartime.[86] That the diminishments of war took their toll on him is exemplified in his exhaustion after the fighting at Verdun, "perhaps, through some physical or moral weakness."[87] On the occasion of the feast of St. Peter (his patron saint), Teilhard finds especially meaningful the account from St. John's Gospel where Christ says to Peter, "when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go."[88] In spite of all his arguments and enthusiasm for an activist building up of the world, Teilhard admits that he feels an "instinctive, ineradicable preference for the determinism of the world, for 'the hand of God upon us.' "[89] He acknowledges this disposition as the sort of reaction whose origin and continuation we just have to accept.

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[79] TF, Oct. 6, 1939, p. 134; LT, Feb. 16, 1940, p. 209; TF, Aug. 18, 1940, pp. 147-48; TF, Jan.25, 1950, pp. 110-11; LT, April 7, 1953, pp. 280-81.

[80] TF, Aug. 18, 1940, p. 148.

[81] Ibid.

[82] MM, May 28, 1915, p. 55 (F 67).

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[83] Ibid.

[84] MM, Oct. 15, 1915, p. 75 (F 93).

[85] Ibid., Feb. 2, 1916, pp. 92-93 (F 116-17).

[86] For example, MM, April 9, 1916, pp. 98-99 (F 123-24); June 18, 1916, pp. 100-101 (F 127).

[87] MM, June 25, 1916 (F 133).

While reading a book about Cardinal Newman, Teilhard remarks that he feels a kindred spirit here both in ideas and in the man himself who experienced so deeply "without being scandalized, the bitter temptation of being born before the due hour or season for his thought."[90] For himself, Teilhard saw that one of the most heart-rending trials would be to have certain abilities or insights which are stifled by the people around him who neither know nor understand.[91] In the providence of God, this became his exacting lifetime struggle.

He also found inaction a burden to bear because he was made to feel so useless.[92] His anxiety is mirrored in the words, "if I really want to be a link between our Lord and the regiment, I have to be the most ready to accept the will of God, the most patient, the most mortified (without, of course, being clumsily passive)."[93] From the private revelations of St. Margaret Mary, Teilhard finds two elements of passivity that sum up what he hopes will be his life:

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[88] John 21:18.

[89] MM, June 29, 1916, pp. 107-08 (F 135-36).

[90] Ibid., July 22, 1916, p. 114 (F 145). Many years later, Teilhard wrote: "I feel that at the age of sixty, I have at last found or pinned down my true vocation. Now the question is to find the right platform, the right significant act. You know that, mistakenly perhaps, I do not like to force events. May the Lord help me not to fail the opportunity when it is offered me." LT, Jan. 12, 1941, p. 225.

[91] MM, Sept. 18, 1916, pp. 127-28 (F 163); Dec. 13, 1918, pp. 268-69 (F 350-51).

[92] MM, Feb. 15, 1917, p. 183 (F 237-38).

> absolute dependence on the creative and sanctifying energy of God which alone can maintain rooted in us the passion for life, the passion for God; and then, once this deep-seated attraction has been implanted in us, an invasion by the divinity of our whole environment, of all that we do, so that for us everything becomes the self-giving transforming God.[94]

According to Teilhard, our absolute dependence is brought home to us especially at the time when we suffer because we suddenly realize that our real strength comes not from within us but from outside, "when we surrender our freedom to conditions of existence that have nothing in common with our petty personal inter-relations."[95] Through war, Teilhard was made vividly aware of the "shadow of death." It gave him further insight into the agony of our Lord on Holy Thursday night: the trial of abandoning himself, with faith and love, to the divine future--a genesis which only God can effect.[96] The Transfiguration for him takes on the aspect of a favorite feast because it symbolizes the metamorphosis which will happen to all of us.[97] In a similar way, during a breviary reading about the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi, Teilhard saw this event as the perfect representation of the universal, transforming Christ. The account convinced him all the more that the seering flame which kindles such a passion for life that Francis exemplifies can come "only from above."[98]

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[93] Ibid., Feb. 17, 1917, p. 184 (F 240).

[94] Ibid., March 31, 1917, p. 192 (F 249).

[95] Ibid., Aug. 14, 1917, p. 202 (F 262-63).

[96] Ibid., Aug. 28, 1918, pp. 230-31 (F 300); Feb. 19, 1919, p. 285 (F 373).

A trial by fire soon touched Teilhard in the form of obedience and submission demanded by the Church. When Cardinal Merry del Val, the Secretary of the Holy Office, censured posthumously certain doctrines of the Jesuit Rousselot (many of whose ideas Teilhard was in full sympathy with), Teilhard prophesied his future: "the worst that could happen to me would be to be sent off to one of those distant shores where I should ask nothing better than to work and research."[99] Teilhard compared himself to a man who sees a light shining through the mist--"impossible to reach our Lord otherwise than by belonging more and more closely to the Church."[100] He admits that if he is to find union with God in all the internal and external forces of the world, then he must exclude none of those forces, "neither death nor 'persecution' in the intellectual field."[101] To say it was one thing; to live it was something else. When he was requested to repudiate his ideas on original sin in 1924, the anguish he felt is described as "something like a death agony or a storm."[102] After the first emotional wrenchings, he writes, "I must show by my example that if my ideas appear in the light of an innovation, they make me as faithful as anyone else to the attitude in which I was formerly seen."[103] Through the comfort and encouragement of his friends and his Jesuit Provincial, Teilhard comes to reflect that "nothing spiritual or divine can come to a Christian, or to one who has taken religious vows, except through the Church or his Order."[104] Yet he could also observe that in a kind of way he had lost confidence in the external manifestation of the Church. Though some people will always be happy with the visible Church, he exclaims that he will be happy to die "in order to be free of it--and to find our Lord outside it"--his cosmic Christ.[105]

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[97] Ibid., Aug. 8, 1919, p. 301 (F 394).

[98] Ibid., Sept. 17, 1919, p. 307 (F 402-403).

[99] Letter to Auguste Valensin, Aug. 11, 1920, cited in Speaight, Life, pp. 113-14.

[100] Letter to Auguste Valensin, March 16, 1921, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 116.

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[101] Zanta, May 20, 1924, p. 67 (F 73).

[102] Letter to Auguste Valensin, May 16, 1925, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 138. Some years later Teilhard reflected that he was made to deny certain things about original sin without any further explanation. "Today I still cannot avoid recognition of its truth." Cf. Speaight, Life, p. 191.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Letter to Le Roy, Aug. 16, 1925, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 139.

[105] Letter to Auguste Valensin, Jan. 10, 1926, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 140.

Teilhard grants that he does not find it easy to put into practice his philosophy of abandoning himself serenely to the forces of the world.[106] But he remained convinced that it was his view of the world and of Christ "which is put to the test in my own life."[107] He was inwardly confident again that his line of thought was essentially Christian even though he admits that at times he is forced to define it by a word "that looks rather dangerous: hyper-Catholic."[108] He often asks God that he might be the ashes from which a new religious revival--the sort of revival that St. Francis of Assisi or St. Ignatius of Loyola brought about--might spring up for our present age.[109] Because he was so convinced that this religious renewal could only come from within the Roman Catholic Church, he maintained a certain optimism in all his trials. "If there is a God, as I believe, he will make the obstacles serve my progress."[110] The possible charge of weakness of character or the lessening of esteem from his friends and those who wanted him to revolt and break away from the Church was another wound for him to accept.[111] As he tried to explain, he could not rebel just for his own personal satisfaction. He would then be untrue to his own ideas and a betrayer to his own friends. All the same, he would not remain totally passive. He was determined to use the restrictive conditions imposed on him to continue to spread his ideas and even told his superiors that he was counting on them to help him.[112] His faith and hope become stronger as the result of this temporary period of anti-ecclesiasticism:

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[106] TF, Sept. 15, 1926, p. 43.

[107] LT, ca. 1927, p. 96.

[108] TF, June 25, 1926, pp. 34-35.

[109] Letter to Auguste Valensin, Dec. 31, 1926, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 172. In TF, April 30, 1927, p. 71, Teilhard proposes: "We have need of a group of new Saint Francises--broader, more aggressive, and more modern than he was in their way of loving the World, but just as logical and nonconformist as he was in the practice of their ideal. We must leave the dead with their dead money, their dead nationalism, their dead ideas, and create, by living it, an atmosphere of new hopes, ambitions, and sympathies."

[110] TF, Feb. 14, 1927, p. 58.

> Since my only rule, both in judgment and in practice, tends more and more to become "Believe in the spirit," it would be very unjust to regard the Church as the one place where the spirit is not to be found. I begin to think that most of our weaknesses are due to the fact that our "belief" is too narrow, and that we don't believe through to the end. To stop believing a second too soon or not to believe enough is sufficient to ruin the whole structure of what we are building.[113]

In a similar way Teilhard found himself in a new and deeper relation to his own Jesuit Order. He speaks of "emerging" from the

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[111] Ibid., and TF, March 13, 1927, p. 62. Much later Teilhard makes this comment about rebellion: "Your proposition that 'rebels accomplish the most' is one of the worst paradoxes of life. I wonder whether the solution has not to be searched in a definition of what means exactly the word rebel. Of course, I do not feel exactly as a prodigal son. Simply, the very development of my mind brings me to a new understanding of several things which I would have been inclined formerly to dismiss too simply, 'the child with the bath.' " TF, May 7, 1939, p. 131.

[112] TF, April 6, 1927, p. 66.

[113] Zanta, April 15, 1929, p. 91 (F 101).

Order definitively and morally in the sense that he can now keep a certain perspective ("without any trace of vain superiority, I think; but simply because, in some way or other, I have grown up").[114] He remains deeply attached to the Order as his "natural point of insertion" into the universe. "And except in the case--which is very unlikely--of my being driven into a corner where I should be faced with intellectual dishonesty, I have decided to remain loyal to it at any cost."[115]

When some of the books of his friend Edouard Le Roy were put on the Index by a decree of the Holy Office on June 24, 1931, Teilhard once again found it a bitter pill to swallow.[116] He set himself the task of breaking out of the imprisonment which the "children of light" have tried to impose on the spirit. The restrictions imposed by the Church seemed so oppressive that "soon we shall ask for nothing better than the regime that the Gospel came to break 2000 years ago."[117] In May, 1933 the Society of Jesus requested that Teilhard turn down any offer he might receive of a position in Paris, because his ideas were not sufficiently reliable. He calmly accepts this renewed diminishment and responds with "what is needed is not revolt, but greater love. I don't know, if it is possible, but I want to try."[118] In June, 1934, there was some indication that officials in Rome wanted Teilhard to appear for a "discussion" about his ideas. He himself was wary, and his Jesuit Provincial, Father de Bonneville, counseled him against accepting the invitation.[119] Since the Jesuit attempt to save Teilhard from outright Roman condemnation was through exile and restrictions on publication, Teilhard remarked wryly, "I resign myself to the activity of a microbe."[120] Not without some boyish humor, Teilhard mentions that he had an English printing made of two essays--"Spirit of the Earth" and "Why I Believe"--for private circulation. "I thought I had a perfect right to do it, but I know I'll 'catch it' when it becomes known."[121] We have no word of any reaction to this case of private publication, but two years later, Teilhard is confronted with a strong letter from the Jesuit Father General. His complaint was about a new essay of Teilhard which had leaked out--"not a bad one," according to Teilhard, "but not the type I would have selected for Roman criticism."[122] Rather calmly, Teilhard expects that new restrictions will result from this incident. He even seeks to explain his persecution not as a personal thing but only coming from men who are bewildered and anxious to defend "tradition." This time he has evidence of the open sympathy of his own French Jesuit superiors, and this too is a welcome support for him.[123] The fact that he now felt his own Order really needed and wanted him made his acceptance of his trials much easier to bear.

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[114] Zanta, Aug. 23, 1929, pp. 93-94 (F 104).

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid., March 20, 1932, pp. 107-108 (F 119-20).

[117] Letter to Auguste Valensin, Oct. 20, 1932, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 190.

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[118] TF, July 7, 1933, pp. 79-80.

[119] Zanta, June 24, 1934, pp. 109-10 (F 123).

[120] Letter to Pierre Lamare, July 1, 1934, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 191.

[121] TF, Oct. 30, 1936, p. 91.

[122] Ibid., Dec. 14, 1938, p. 126.

With the beginning of the Second World War, Teilhard felt the diminishments of age and of exile where he could only wait and watch.[124] In the midst of these circumstances, the offer of a chair in the College de France was made in February, 1940. But he himself felt obliged to his work in China and so refused the position.[125] Perhaps, as a result of these factors along with the fall of France, he asked prayers because he felt so depressed ("the reverse of myself").[126] His attention and effort during this period were being applied to the writing of The

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[123] Ibid., March 30, 1939, pp. 129-30.

[124] TF, Sept. 17, 1939, p. 134. At the end of the war, Teilhard reflects: "Physically, well, I am four years older, past sixty-four. My hair (what is left of it) is quite gray, now. But, on the whole, I don't think that you would hesitate to recognize me. The body is still strong. But getting older does not make my nerves as calm as I would like. On the whole, I have been spared by the war. Too much, I think. I have been living here in the backwater, and this is not so good for a would-be 'prophet.' " TF, Oct. 10, 1945, p. 163.

[125] This incident is reported in J.-M. Mortier, Avec Teilhard de Chardin "vues ardentes," pp. 10-11.

[126] TF, June 18, 1940, p. 145.

Phenomenon of Man. The war added to the ordinary difficulties of his attempt to publish. But he managed to get the manuscript forwarded to Rome and to censorship via friends in the United States. The story of the publication difficulties would culminate in Teilhard's first and last visit to Rome in October, 1948. Shortly after submitting the manuscript to Rome in early 1941, he refers to some further restrictions that the Church had imposed. Once again he tries to explain calmly and cautiously to his many friends within and outside the Church why he must continue to accept and work from within the Church.[127] Age becomes a greater concern as he enters his sixties, and he speaks of how his spiritual life is more and more an active abandoning to the presence and action of God.[128] Getting older also doesn't make his nerves as calm as he would like.[129]

Upon his return to France in 1946, he was buoyed by the interest shown in his various essays that had had a rather large private circulation in wartime France.[130] But he was soon to realize the hardship such notoriety can inflict. Restricted by his Jesuit superiors, he could not attend an important meeting in Brussels because it was considered "inopportune" for him.[131] Just as the opposition to him began to mount, he was struck down by a serious heart attack in June, 1947. He tried to look upon this setback as "something constructive and new," "a touch of the spur rather than a tug on the bridle--should the Lord give me strength."[132] Two months later he received a letter from the Jesuit General in Rome forbidding him to publish anything that involved philosophy or theology.[133] Teilhard saw that the intention of his Jesuit superiors was to protect him, and it is apparent in his reply to his Father General:[134]

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[127] Ibid., March 21, 1941, pp. 155-56. In his retreat jottings of 1942, Teilhard wrote: "It is necessary that my way must render me (and render those who also take it) more mortified (in the true and deep sense: excentrated)." Cited by H. de Lubac, L'éternel féminin, p. 96.

[128] LT, May 19, 1941, p. 231.

[129] TF, Oct. 10, 1945, p. 163.

[130] Ibid., May 26, 1946, p. 165.

> I have no need to say that, with God's help, you may count upon me. I am too surely convinced--and more so day by day--that the world can only be fulfilled in Christ, and that Christ can only be found through an interior submission to the Church, for me to have been able to feel the slightest hesitation at the news of your decision. I only hope that the Lord will help me faithfully to find my way in a situation which is psychologically difficult. Fortunately I have around me, here, in the Society great and reliable friends whom you know, and who will help me on the road.[135]

In the midst of all these troubles--physical and psychological, Teilhard claims that he has never seen so clearly or so passionately the vision of the future which he has spent his life trying to grasp, express, and propagate.[136] He describes his feeling of weakness and vulnerability and yet has confidence that it is through this very helplessness that God is most likely to act.[137] When he accepts the invitation to Rome, prodded by his desire to help along the publication of The Phenomenon of Man and also his possible acceptance of a teaching post in a French university, he sets out without pleasure, but with conviction to "deliver" his soul.[138] When all the results of his Roman visit appeared to be negative, Teilhard was not crestfallen or rebellious but rather he counted on events to guide him and show à solution.[139] Once more rejecting any advice of leaving his Order or the Church, Teilhard continues to think of the effect such an action would have on his friends and "followers" as well as the violation of his whole spiritual construction.[140] In a letter to George Barbour (a fellow-scientist and non-Catholic), he denies that he should be pitied as a persecuted man.[141] For despite the difficulties of speaking out, he finds his ideas taking sharper form in his own heart and echoing more and more widely throughout the world. What Teilhard does find a hardship during this time is his own lack of a positive objective in his life.[142]

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[131] Ibid., Nov. 1, 1946, p. 169.

[132] Ibid., July 4, 1947, p. 173; LT, July 15, 1947, p. 241.

[133] Letter to Abbé Breuil, Sept. 23, 1947, Album, p. 178.

[134] TF, Sept. 24, 1947, p. 177.

[135] Letter to Father General, Sept. 25, 1947, cited in Speaight, Life, pp. 277-78.

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[136] TF, Oct. 16, 1947, p. 101.

[137] Ibid., May 26, 1948, p. 105.

[138] Ibid., Oct. 2, 1948, p. 188.

[139] Ibid., Dec. 3, 1948, pp. 107-108; Feb. 8, 1949, pp. 196-97.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Letter to George Barbour, April 15, 1949, in G. Barbour, Field, pp. 125-26.

> More and more, I am convinced that fidélité to Life is the only and the highest form of sainteté.
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> Which does not mean, of course, that Life should always be perfectly clear about what we have to do. And this is the case for me, just right now. . . . I feel, in a confused way, that I should perhaps do something--but what? . . . Still, I would like something to happen, to show me the way on.[143]

The atmosphere around him grew tense again with the publication of Pius XII's encyclical, Humani Generis. He spent a good deal of time reassuring his friends and others that the encyclical was not quite as negative as it might first appear (although he confessed "it would be difficult to present a narrower view of humanity").[144] In order to disappear from Paris where things were getting a little "too hot" for him, Teilhard was happy to take up a proposed trip to South Africa.[145] Ultimately, it was only the pull towards the "ever greater God" that enticed him to take on this new--"and perhaps my last?"--adventure.[146] In the midst of this trip, he sent another letter off to the Jesuit General, Father Janssens.

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[142] TF, Sept. 1, 1949, p. 110 and p. 212.

[143] Ibid., Feb. 22, 1949, p. 199.

[144] Letter to Solange Lemaitre, Aug. 17, 1950, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 298. Also cf. TF, Aug. 25, 1950, pp. 215-16.

[145] Letter to George Barbour, Nov. 11, 1950, in G. Barbour, Field, pp. 131-32, and p. 134.

[146] LT, July 11, 1951, p. 251.

The point of the letter was to assure him of his loyalty and obedience, whatever might appear to the contrary.[147] For what may have seemed to be obstinacy or insubordination during the past thirty years on Teilhard's part was simply the result of his own inability to contain the sense of wonder at his Christic vision and the consequent desire to share it with others. The letter expresses both Teilhard's idea of struggling against all diminishment and at the same time his anticipatory tendency to resignation. Truly it was resignation that he needed to accept once again an exile to a foreign country, the United States. Although acceptance was hard, he still worked and continued to write--now setting about the writing of "Le Christique," "which has a good chance, like the earlier, of never seeing the light, at least in my lifetime."[148] In a final letter to his Provincial Superior and friend, Father Ravier, written on Good Friday, April 8, 1955, he sums up his own life of diminishment with the observation:

> What the world expects from the Church of God is a generalization and deepening of the meaning of the Cross. . . . In a universe which is in the way of unification with God, the Cross (without losing its expiatory and compensatory function) becomes, even more surely, the symbol and expression of evolution as a whole.. . . . That is what I believe, and that is what I so long to confess publicly before I die.[149]

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[147] Letter to Father General, Oct. 12, 1951, cited in Grenet, Teilhard de Chardin (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1966), pp. 164-66; also Speaight, Life, p. 307.

[148] LT, April 5, 1954, p. 293.

[149] Letter to Père Ravier, April 8, 1955, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 331.

Such was the confession of the very life he led.

Death

The ultimate test of diminishment is death. Teilhard's reaction to death as it strikes down the members of his family and his close friends confirms the views that he more abstractly professes in his essays. Passing through a period of a grateful, pious acceptance of death, Teilhard finds it hard not to rebel or give up when death cuts down men in their prime of life. From his letters, we find him moving on to a stage of reflective calm and soon even to a desire for his own death. From this generalization on the movement of his thought, let us examine more closely various concrete instances.

When his oldest brother Albéric dies in 1902, Teilhard proposes that now Albéric loves the family and looks after them better than ever before.[150] This death signifies the greater love of God since he sends a greater trial. After his twelve-year-old sister, Louise, dies of meningitis, Teilhard responds with a prayer that our Lord may soften the family sorrow with the thought that "if he spares our family so little it is because he has found that it can serve him in a special way."[151] The emphasis on the family bereavement, which is evident in these early letters, is gradually changed over to a stress on death as the completion of one's life. After his sister Francoise died in China at the age of thirty-two, Teilhard wrote to his parents that they didn't have to regret the good she would have done if she had had a longer life. "It is a beautiful life which fulfills the designs of God."[152] His brother, Gonzague, at the age of twenty, was killed in an assault on a German trench in November, 1914. Teilhard reflects that "you could not dream of a more beautiful ideal for your son than for him to give up his life as a true Christian in one of the greatest tasks this century has yet seen and which shall probably be spoken of throughout history."[153]

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[150] Letter to his parents, Sept., 1902, Album, p. 28.

[151] Letter to his parents, August, 1904, Album, p. 29.

War, of course, brought a whole new perspective of death. It becomes an ordinary event that can happen at any moment to anyone.[154] Yet when his friend Boussac is killed, Teilhard is first tempted to reject a ridiculous world which destroys its finest products. Then he reflects that "man's labor, whatever form it may take, must be essentially tenacious, patient, gentle."[155] Without complaint, man must continue to put right the disorders and obstacles which bruise and crush humanity in order that a new order may take shape. Teilhard admits that the apprehension in death lies in the fear of the unknown.[156] Because the realities of faith are not as solidly felt as the realities of experience, we are bound to be terrified and bewildered. But we have to hold on to the fact that death surrenders us to God.

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[152] Hastings, June 7, 1911, p. 148-49 (F 237).

[153] Paris, Dec. 23, 1914, p. 156 (F 462-63), footnote 1.

[154] MM, May 17, 1915, pp. 52-53 (F 64).

[155] Ibid., Sept. 8, 1916, pp. 123-24 (F 157-58).

[156] Ibid., Nov. 13, 1916, pp. 144-45 (F 185-86).

The death of his uncle recalls all the familial deaths which shake away a past so that nothing is quite the same as it was before. Teilhard asks whether this is not a providential economy "that burns our boats behind us and drives us on in continual detachment."[157] When his brother Olivier died of his wounds in 1918, Teilhard consoles his parents with the thought that his life, though short, amounted to something--and so much more precious than just a growing old. "You see, there are lives that you could not bear to see bent or become shut in or constricted, and yet you cannot see how they could just continue to grow."[158] As Teilhard knew him, Olivier was such a man. Death was to be desired as a real threshold opening out into a new development.

Upon the sudden death of Dr. Davidson Black, a close scientific colleague of Teilhard, he reflects that without the reality and survival of the spirit, "we would have to be idiots not to call off the whole human effort."[159] He recalls that he swore on the body of his dead friend, "to fight more vigorously than ever to give hope to man's work and inquiry."[160] The death of his sister Marguerite-Marie in 1936, after years of being an invalid, created a sort of wilderness around Teilhard. Although he felt that he would miss her physical presence terribly, he was certain that her power of inspiring and watching over him was strengthened by her crossing this new threshold of growth.[161] In November, 1942, a full year after his brother Gabriel's death, Teilhard received the news. He reflects that the "very value and happiness of existence consists in passing on into something greater than self."[162] At the end of 1953, Auguste Valensin died--a lifelong Jesuit friend whom Teilhard loved deeply. His reaction betrays almost a touch of envy: "now he 'sees.' When will it be my turn?"[163]

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[157] Ibid., Nov. 23, 1916, pp. 147-48 (F 188-89).

[158] Letter to his parents, May 16, 1918, Album, p. 57.

[159] LT, March 19, 1934, p. 155.

His own preoccupation with death--except for the unnatural situation of World War I--becomes evident in his letters about 1930. He had just celebrated his fiftieth birthday, and he speaks of being on the downward slope of life.[164] Five years later he complains that it is not a simple matter to keep young and retain a fighting spirit.[165]

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[160] Ibid., April 10, 1934, pp. 155-56.

[161] Ibid., Aug., 1936, p. 177; Sept. 15, 1936, pp. 177-78.

[162] Ibid., Nov. 25, 1942, p. 233.

[163] Ibid., Jan. 5, 1954, p. 291.

[164] Ibid., Sept. 24, 1931, p. 140.

[165] TF, June 22, 1938, pp. 122-23.

It is easier to start in life, he reflects, than to end it nicely. In fact, he believes that he has now come to the difficult part of his existence.[166] Age was dimming life's radiance for him, but he was feeling closer to our Lord "by 'communicating' with the becoming of things--their motions, their repressions, their rhythm, their personal soul, and above all with Him."[167] Teilhard hoped that by finishing well he might prove the value of the ideas that he had defended in life.[168] While looking forward to his annual retreat in 1954, Teilhard comments that he hopes it will bring him closer to God "who every day is 'coming closer' and of whom, if I am to end well, I have every day a greater need."[169] In one of his last letters in 1955, Teilhard wrote: "I feel myself more optimistic than ever. The route is so clear, and the horizons ahead are so magnificent . . . the whole question is to remain alive and open."[170]

The death of Teilhard on Easter Sunday was just such a further opening out into life.

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[166] Ibid., Aug. 3, 1938, pp. 123-24.

[167] LT, Jan. 25, 1940, p. 204.

[168] TF, Feb. 9, 1940, p. 98; LT, Sept. 4, 1948, p. 244; LT, Dec. 13, 1952, p. 278; LT, Nov. 8, 1953, p. 290.

[169] LT, Aug. 29, 1954, p. 295.

[170] Letter to Solange Lemaitre, 1955, "In Memoriam," from Cahier, II, p. 157.

His Prayer

Teilhard frequently lapses into passages of prayer in his various essays, especially The Divine Milieu and "The Mass on the World." A few favorite prayers mentioned in letters and some retreat note jottings also allow us a glimpse into his prayerful reaction to the "heavy" hand of God. In Teilhard's eyes, prayer at its deepest point is a particular instance of our human passivity. He addresses God, "from you alone comes all initiation--and this applies in the first place to my prayer."[171]

A prayer-formula, which was a favorite of Teilhard during the war, came from a sixteenth-century Jesuit. Teilhard admits that its language is strong, and for that very reason he retains the original Latin when he sends it on to his cousin.[172] The prayer is addressed to the Heart of Christ. It asks that Jesus take us into the inmost center of his heart and there so to burn and purify us that we are nothing other than what is pleasing to his heart. While the prayer makes us piously aware of a purification phase of the spiritual life, it doesn't show specifically the more cosmic approach which is included in Teilhard's personal aspiration, "Jesus, be for me a real world."[173] This real world was one in which Teilhard prayed that he might never forget that God alone was to be sought in everything. "You will send me privations, disappointments, and suffering in the hours you know best. The object of my love will dwindle, and I will step out beyond it."[174] In fact, it is through sorrow and not through joy, Teilhard prayerfully reflects, "that your Godhead gradually assumes, in our sentient faculty, the higher Reality it possesses in the nature of things."[175] This transfiguration or transformation is helped along, according to Teilhard, when the heart can feel the stability and consistence of God alone--no more effectively produced than in the "icy chill of disappointment."[176]

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[171] HU, "The Mass on the World," p. 22 (F 21).

[172] MM, Sept. 23, 1917, p. 203 (F 264).

[173] Ibid., July 30, 1918, p. 223 (F 290).

As his further experiences deepen personally this realization,we find Teilhard looking at the passivity of being born into life and our whole inherited environment. He prays that by a reversal of forces, which only God can bring about, his own terror in the face of all such matters beyond his control or his choice may be turned into an overflowing joy because it means being transformed into God.[177] Teilhard thanks God for having led him to discover the milieu which makes everything divine--"through the influence of gifted friends who entered my life at certain moments to bring light and strength to my mind, and through the awakenings of spirit I owe to the successive initiations, gentle and terrible, which you caused me to undergo."[178] But for any man to live in the divine milieu, a strong faith is always necessary. A frequent petition on his lips, then, is "give me faith" that in every creature he may discover and sense God's presence.[179] Despite his raptures about life in a world filled with God, Teilhard honestly proclaimed that he felt the darkness and obscurity of faith as much as anyone.

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[174] WTW, "The Mystical Milieu," 1917, p. 126 (F 146).

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

[177] HU, "The Mass on the World," 1923, p. 29 (F 29).

> Our doubts, just as our suffering, are the price and condition for the perfection of the universe. Under these conditions I consent to walk right to the end along a road of which I am more and more certain, towards an horizon more and more shrouded in mist. (This is how I believe.)[180]

It is through prayer that Teilhard recognizes God's presence in the world around him more fully. Prayer, too, becomes the petition to ask him to be ever more present in everything.[181] He tells God that it is not a matter of his being consoled, but rather of his being completed. He describes the "two marvelous hands" of God--"the one which holds us so firmly that it is merged, in us, with the sources of life; and the other whose embrace is so wide that, at its slightest pressure, all the springs of the universe respond harmoniously together."[182] In the one hand,

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[178] Ibid., pp. 25-56 (F 25).

[179] Ibid., p. 29 (F 28).

[180] "Comment je crois," 1934, ms., pp. 26-27.

[181] DM, pp. 50-51 (F 77-79).

[182] Ibid.

Teilhard sees the "givenness" of his life: the other hand he identifies with that providence which balances off all the interplay of forces, including our prayer, to produce a harmonious (that is, according to the divine will) result.

> But how am I to set about showing you and proving to myself, through some external effort, that I am not one of those who say Lord, Lord! with their lips only? I shall collaborate in your forestalling action and will do so doubly. First, to your deep inspiration which commands me to be, I shall respond by taking great care never to stifle nor distort nor waste my power to love and to do. Next, to your all-enveloping providence which shows me at each moment, by the day's events, the next step to take and the next rung to climb, I shall respond by my care never to miss an opportunity of rising "towards the spirit."[183]

Teilhard closes this particular prayer, begging God that he may always be both in his within and in his without where God would have him be.

Although many of his prayers are addressed to Jesus Christ, he is impatient with a devotion that looks only backwards to the God-Man of two thousand years ago.[184] His own love is not aroused by stressing the human qualities of Jesus. If it were human qualities which are important, he could look around at family and friends and be satisfied in the immediacy of their charm and goodness. The need he feels--and a need, he proposes, that becomes more and more apparent as men develop their personality--is the need to adore. Adoration means losing oneself in the unfathomable, plunging into the inexhaustible, being absorbed in a defined immensity, finding peace in the incorruptible, giving of one's deepest self to one whose depth has no end, annihilating oneself in proportion as one becomes more deliberately conscious of oneself. It is only the risen Christ--the God-Man who is now in glory--who is coming again "clothed in the glory of the world"--who can satisfy the need for his adoration.[185]

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[183] Ibid., p. 51 (F 78-79).

[184] Ibid., pp. 106-107 (F 156-58). In TF, Oct. 30, 1926, p. 48, Teilhard states: "I prefer Saint John and Saint Paul who really present in the resurrected Christ, a being as vast as the World of all times."

It is only because Christ is in the process of clothing himself with the glory of this world that everything and everyone is lovable. Matter can be addressed in prayer by Teilhard because the power of Christ has passed into it.[186] His own human body and the consecrated bread and wine at Mass are just extraordinary and specialized instances of Christ's power present in matter. It is the whole world of matter that can and should lead us Godwards. In fact, it seemed so much easier to Teilhard (just as it probably does to all men at various times) to find God in the world of sunsets and flowers, of dogs and of oceans than in the world of men--selfish, demanding, intruding into our personal peace. And so while the need for Christ is a Christ who is cosmic in scope, the need Teilhard feels in relation to men is not the global love of neighbor but the real love of the individual, the "other" than me. He begs God's help to allow him to see the divine in men, "at their most personal, and most true, and most distant."[187] A cosmic Christ breaks down the love for neighbor which is based on a sympathy of kindred souls. It demands a love for the individual, concrete, personal "other" on the basis of a union already present in and through Christ. Teilhard is saying in a prayerful way his axiom, "union differentiates." We need not fear, as Christians, to plunge into the deepest recesses of individuality which mark our person because it will not make for division but rather for union. To love everyone--the crowd--is psychologically impossible. But what we are being asked in Christian love is to love one and the same personal being who is Christ--the cosmic Christ joining together in union not only all the distinct personalities with whom _we_ come in contact but all who make up the entire world. As a summary petition, Teilhard prays:

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[185] Ibid. Also cf. WTW, "The Priest," 1918: "Christ is loved as a person; he compels recognition as a world," p. 213 (F 293).

[186] DM, pp. 86-87 (F 128-29).

> Jesus, Savior of human activity to which you have given meaning, Savior of human suffering to which you have given living value, be also Savior of human unity; compel us to discard our pettinesses, and to venture forth, resting upon you, into the uncharted ocean of charity.[188]

Communion with God through matter and in people is a basic theme that underlies Teilhard's frequent references to the Mass. We find it articulated in his wartime writings, for example, in "The Mystical Milieu." Christ's consecratory words "This is my Body" has made everything in the universe, which nourished man for his life of spirit and grace, divine--"it is divinized, divinizing, and divinizable."[189] In "The Priest," Teilhard refers to the hands of Jesus, which "have broken the bread before they hallow it."[190] And he prays that the blood of Jesus--the blood of endeavor and the blood of renouncement--may mingle with the pain of the world. He continues, "Lord, I do not just passively give way to these blessed passivities: I offer myself to them, actively, and do all I can to promote them."[191] The Mass theme, however, is most developed in the essay "The Mass on the World." It was written while Teilhard was on his first China scientific expedition. When circumstances did not allow him as a priest to offer Mass, he prayed his own version of a mass in offering up the world.[192] What he tried to offer up was every increase, every diminishment, every death of a particular day. In his consecration of this offering, he identifies "This is my Body" with all the life and growth and development of that day; every death-force is included in the words "This is my Blood."

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[187] _Ibid._, pp. 126-28 (F 184-87).

[188] _Ibid._, p. 128 (F 187).

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[189] WTW, "The Mystical Milieu," 1917, p. 146 (F 164-65).

[190] Ibid., "The Priest," 1918, p. 209 (F 288).

[191] Ibid., p. 215 (F 295).

[192] HU, "The Mass on the World," 1923, p. 20 (F 18-19).

According to Teilhard, his communion would not be fully Christian unless

> together with the gains which this new day brings me, I did not also accept, in my own name and in the name of the world as the most immediate sharing of your own being, those processes, hidden or manifest, of enfeeblement, of ageing, of death, which unceasingly consume the universe, to its salvation, or condemnation.[193]

As a Christian, too, Teilhard could not escape praying about the possibility of eternal condemnation. Through God's revelation, Teilhard accepts the existence of hell as a structural element in the universe. Hell, he maintains, does add "an accent, a gravity, a contrast, a depth which would not exist without it."[194] If we have enough faith, we can accept that temptations and evil are converted into good and can fan the fires of our love. God will catch up deliberate and malign action and twist it around by his irresistible energy.[195] Through his prayer, Teilhard finds that he can even accept that a person, lost in spite of the call of grace, will not spoil the perfection of the final union in the Pauline Pleroma. For the damned--if there be such--are not excluded from the Pleroma, but "only from its luminous aspect, and from its beatification. They lose it, but they are not lost to it."[196] The notion of hell, however, continues to upset Teilhard so that he is forced to pray:

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[193] Ibid., pp. 31-32 (F 31). See also DM, pp. 61-63 (F 94-96): "Teach me to treat my death as an act of communion."

[194] DM, p. 130 (F 190).

[195] In DM, p. 131 (F 192), Teilhard reflects that "the fires of hell and the fires of heaven are not two different forces, but contrary manifestations of the same energy."

> O Jesus, our splendidly beautiful and jealous Master, closing my eyes to what my human weakness cannot as yet understand and therefore cannot bear--that is to say, to the reality of the damned--I desire at least to make the ever present threat of damnation a part of my habitual and practical vision of the world, not in order to fear you, but in order to be more intensely yours.[197]

As Teilhard begins to accept the inevitability of his own approaching death, we find him persistently praying and asking others to pray that he "might end well." He calls it the "grace of graces."[198] In his retreat notes, he reflects that he has to assimilate the shadows of later life--"the enfeeblement, loneliness, the sense that no further horizon lies ahead."[199] He consoles himself with the thought that "old age comes from him, old age leads on to him, and old age will touch me only in so far as he wills."[200] He repeatedly commits to Christ his final active years and his death: "do not let them impair or spoil the work I have so dreamed of achieving for you."[201] He wants to "live" his death as passionately as he has his life, and so he proclaims that " 'to be ready' has never seemed to mean anything to me but this: 'to be straining forwards.' "[202] Death no longer appears so fearful to him because "what comes to one at the very end: the adorable."[203] With a certain boldness, then, he sums up his life as well as his death in one of his final retreat reflections, "'I go forward to meet him who comes."[204]

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[196] DM, pp. 129-30 (F 188-90).

[197] Ibid., p. 131 (F 192).

[198] HU, "Pensées," (Notes of Retreats 1944-1955), p. 100 (F 107).

[199] Ibid., p. 98 (F 106).

[200] Ibid., p. 99 (F 106).

[201] Ibid., p. 100 (F 107).

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[202] Ibid., p. 99 (F 106).

[203] Ibid., p. 100 (F 107).

[204] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

COUNSELOR AND COMFORTER

> "in everything God works for good with
> those who love him." Romans 8:28

In his role as a son and brother, as a friend, and as a religious priest, Teilhard was frequently called upon for his advice and support. His letters, once again, provide a certain practical corroboration of the theory he presents in his essays. Our purpose, then, in this chapter is to review his response to other people who were caught up in concrete circumstances of development, conflict, and suffering. Fortunately we do have a wide range of letters preserved, so that a rather complete picture of his thought as a Jesuit counselor emerges. For convenience in grouping--though it also follows roughly a chronological sequence--we will divide the significant correspondence which we possess into five sections: (1) the family; (2) his cousin, Marguerite Teillard-Chambon; (3) Léontine Zanta; (4) two friends; (5) various individuals. There may appear, at times, a certain repetition of sources used in the previous chapter. But our objective at this time is not to focus on the reaction of Teilhard himself but rather upon his attempt to influence or console others. His words of comfort are neither mawkishly sentimental nor coldly analytical. In general, he follows throughout his correspondence the advice he wrote to his cousin: ". . . if not for everyone, at least (it's St. Paul who says this) for those who love God, everything works together for the greatest good of the soul. His 'optimism' is qualified, but very consoling."[1]

The Family

Teilhard's approach to the Passion in Christian life is capsulized very early in a letter he wrote to his sister Francoise. She was wrestling with various doubts and difficulties before she made her final decision to enter religious life as a Little Sister of the Poor. In the face of her trials, Teilhard observed, she looks at her crucifix from the wrong side. "It is not only the Cross you should see but Jesus Christ who is on the Cross."[2]

Although Teilhard will deepen and expand this idea, still two elements shine out in this early spiritual counsel. First, he is already emphasizing the personal element--Jesus Christ--as the key to our Christian vision. Not just a cross-symbol or abstraction, he would say, but a person. The second element is like the first, in that Teilhard in no way commends effort or pain in themselves but only accepts and welcomes them in view of an ideal which we have glimpsed and once again he emphasizes the person of Jesus Christ as that ideal. About this same time he comforts his parents on the death of Albéric, the oldest of their children. Without the clarity of his personalistic universe, Teilhard expresses himself in more traditional terms of suffering as valuable for the next life. But already he does give some hint towards its integral role in the effort required for present development. He speaks of his own increased love for them, reminds them of the greater love of God demonstrated by the greater trials he sends them, and concludes with a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, "who knows what it is to lose a son,"[3] to give them a heavenly strength and consolation. When his younger sister, Louise, dies in 1904, Teilhard softens the sorrow of his parents with a repetition of his thought that this loss of their daughter is a call from God to a more special service here and now.[4] Teilhard realizes, however, that sorrow is slow to be relieved. Even a year later, he is saying, "one just has to keep telling our Lord that his will be done."[5]

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[1] MM, Dec. 2, 1915, p. 82 (F 102).

[2] Francoise Teilhard de Chardin, Petite Soeur des Pauvres, p. 21. Cited in Cuenot, Teilhard de Chardin, p. 7, footnote 9.

He expresses pity for his parents during a serious illness of their son, Gabriel, since it recalls too painfully the deaths of their other children and the permanent invalidism of their daughter, Marguerite-Marie.[6] In order to bolster the spirits of his family, he suggests that this particular sickness may serve some good for Gabriel's future and perhaps a temporal good for the whole family. But whether some good presently is forthcoming or not, Teilhard proposes that the heavenly value of this pain and suffering will count very highly in the eyes of God. In this same letter, he also indicates that their family suffering can perhaps serve as an "expiatory coin" for the evils and wrongs committed by their own country. (We have to remember that this is the period of strong anti-religious laws in France.)

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[3] Letter to his parents, Sept., 1902, Album, p. 28.

[4] Ibid., Aug., 1904, Album, p. 29.

[5] Egypt, Dec. 1, 1905, p. 51 (F 56).

Gradually he begins to fix his consolation more and more in terms of the immediacy of this life. On Passion Sunday in 1907, he sympathizes that the pain of separation, especially Francoise's and his own, is still felt so strongly by the family, and yet he hopes it will be assuaged by their even greater love for one another and the happiness which their children show in the state of life which each has chosen.[7] As an example of his early concern for combining all possible human effort with a reliance upon God, there is the occasion of an almost miraculous, though temporary, improvement in the convalescent condition of his sister Marguerite-Marie. Teilhard rejoices with his family at the good news, and he immediately refers the happy result to the loving care of the Blessed Virgin and to the intercession of the recently deceased Albéric and Louise.[8] Furthermore, he suggests that his sister be taken to Lourdes both in thanksgiving and hopefully to complete the cure for her illness.[9] When his mother and sister do set out for Lourdes, he expresses a cautious optimism that regardless of the immediate outcome, many blessings will be given to the family.[10] Although the pilgrimage does result in an immediate disappointment, Teilhard encourages his parents with the fact that they should be peaceful, knowing that they have done everything possible, both by prayer and by medicine.[11]

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[6] Ibid., June 18, 1907, p. 145 (F 159).

[7] Ibid., March 17, 1907, p. 151 (F 165).

In 1911, Francoise's death in China comes as a real blow for the family. It is interesting to note the slightly different tone of Teilhard's consolation from the previous occasions of his brother's and sister's deaths. Teilhard tries to support his parents more directly with the thought that "it is difficult to imagine a holier or more beautiful death."[12] For he points out that she herself had wanted to die in China and for China, and had even expressed the desire to see God as soon as possible.

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[8] Ibid., Aug. 18, 1907, p. 185 (F 204).

[9] Ibid., Sept. 3, 1907, p. 189 (F 209).

[10] Ibid., Oct. 31, 1907, p. 200 (F 221).

[11] Ibid., Nov. 22, 1907, p. 203 (F 224).

[12] Hastings, June 7, 1911, p. 148 (F 236-37).

We cannot truly be sorrowful, according to Teilhard, when a life is so perfectly fulfilled in seeking out God's will. This notion of the completeness of a life (even though Francois was only thirty-two) will continue to receive a great stress as Teilhard works out his theory of personalization.

In another glimpse of his role as a consoling son, Teilhard wrote to his mother on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows in 1912. Reflecting on this particular feast, he finds that he cannot insist on God removing troubles from his own mother right away, in view of the sorrows which Our Lady sustained.

> My poor Mother, you must find at times that it is really an effort to keep on going. . . . But strengthen yourself with the thought of what happy results will come of all your suffering. Through it we are united to the suffering of Our Savior and to Our Lord himself. Let us keep it in mind and know that in spite of all appearances, the most difficult times are those we spend living well. Besides it will all come to an end. I told you in August: those last ten years, with all their sad events, are over, as if they had been the happiest ever; but it must have done a lot of good in heaven and must have helped all the souls we love and even those we don't know. I often entreated Our Lord to help and console both you and Father . . .[13]

This particular passage suggests a great many of the Teilhardian characteristics for making detachment and diminishment an integral part of our development. But they are still viewed apart from his evolutionary vision. First, he stresses effort--the necessity to keep trying; this point will be strengthened further through his insight into man's development. Next he focuses on the eventual good which results from diminishment. At this time of his life, Teilhard does not attempt to explain the role of suffering in human growth itself. Instead, he passes immediately to the ultimate significance of diminution in that it not only draws us closer to the crucified Christ but more importantly it is a means by which God can enter more fully into union with us.[14] He states a spiritual principle for his mother's comfort--a principle to which he will always remain faithful. The principle simply stated is: what we consider our hard times are really the occasions when we live most passionately and are truly most alive--and this can be contrary to all appearances. When the period of stress and difficulty is over--as Teilhard suggests in regard to the past ten years in the Teilhard family--it now appears to have been as well completed as if it had been the happiest of times. Yet while we speak of bad times passing, we should realize that there is always a permanence for our life in heaven, not only a good for ourselves but also a profit for people we do not even know. All of this last section seems to be piously traditional, and it remains only suggestive of the theory in which Teilhard will restructure traditional piety by mankind's mutual interaction in the completing of the universal or cosmic Christ. What will remain constant is Teilhard's recognition of his own inadequacy to express better his own loving support. In mentioning that he always entreats our Lord to help and console both his mother and his father, Teilhard bows before the healing consolation which only God can give. Only a year later, again on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, Teilhard addresses his mother with his prayer that she might better recognize the will of God and understand the good which suffering can be.[15] In this letter there is a glimpse into the mystery of human passivity, as Teilhard comments, "let us take each day as it comes and leave to Him the many things over which we have no control."[16]

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[13] Paris, Sept. 22, 1912, pp. 29-30 (F 328-29).

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[14] There would seem to be an evident cross-fertilization of minds between Teilhard and his sister, Marguerite-Marie. In her book, *L'énergie spirituelle de la souffrance* (Paris: Seuil, 1951), she writes: "There are three trials which prove to be fruitful only on the condition of being struggled against: temptation, scruple, sickness. . . . The good God sends sickness in order to make us aware of our true personality. Get it clear in your head that sickness is never sent to diminish us but in order to make us grow morally greater. It is in order for us to try to leave hold of ourselves." Pp. 96-97. Cf. *Paris*, Sept. 22, 1912, p. 30, footnote 2 (F 329).

The death of his brother Olivier in 1918--death, always the most final of diminishments to be borne--is the occasion for another letter of consolation.[17] His basic expression of sympathy is consistent with that of his letter upon the death of his sister Francoise seven years earlier. Teilhard states that it is necessary for all of them to admit that an end has come to one of the best parts of family life. But while accepting this fact, his parents can rejoice in the realization that their sons' lives (two had died in the war) had amounted to something--fulfilling a much more precious wish of the parents than merely the desire that their sons could enjoy a long life. Eventually the value of this patriotic ideal of giving one's life for his country in fighting at the front line is enlarged in the Teilhardian vision of spending one's life at the human front in the building up of the Universal Christ.

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[15] Paris, Sept. 22, 1913, pp. 110-11 (F 414-15).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Letter to his parents, May 16, 1918, Album, p. 57.

In summary, we might note that these family letters of Teilhard are the earliest glimpses at the original vision of life which sustained him and which he passed on to those he loved very dearly. The examples we have studied are predominantly in the context of suffering and death because of the frequent tragedies within the family itself. The consolation which Teilhard offers is firmly based in Christian piety, and for the most part only gives hint of its later form when it will be incorporated into the Teilhardian description of total personal development. When we consider, however, the letters of Teilhard to his cousin, Marguerite Teillard-Chambon, written towards the end of the same period as the family letters (i.e., during the First World War), we come upon a much more boldly expressed counsel, arising specifically out of his evolving personal vision.

His Cousin

Marguerite Teillard-Chambon held in great admiration her cousins, the two sisters of Pierre Teilhard--Francoise, who gave her life in China as a Little Sister of the Poor, and Marguerite-Marie, who as an invalid kept up her spirits and enthusiasm for life, eventually even as the very active president of the Catholic Union of the Sick in France.[18] Though Marguerite did not feel a call to the religious life, she wanted very much to consecrate her life to the service of Christ. At the beginning of her correspondence with Teilhard, she was already involved in the setting up of a school for Catholic girls in Paris. It is in the context of her seeking out what this service of Christ means that we study the counsel of Teilhard de Chardin.

The heavy stress, then, throughout their exchange, will be on vocation and the necessity of effort in living it out. This keynote of their correspondence is sounded very early when Teilhard asks Marguerite to join her "effort to live" with his own "so that, each supporting the other, we may work more effectively in the service of our Lord."[19] He then goes on to compare the struggle of war with her own efforts in education. If we accept that the ideals of a civilization are worth men sacrificing their lives, Teilhard asks, should we not be willing to safeguard Christian education at the cost of some people's existence, even Marguerite's own?

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[18] An example of Marguerite-Marie's ardor is found in her last published article: "If we must succumb (. . .), let it be an active sacrifice, a renouncing of action in favor of a higher form of action. But, until the last sigh is drawn, we must keep ourselves alert for a task that is never finished. Then death will not be for us an end, or a desertion, but a happy homecoming to our Father's house." "Le jour qui vient," cited in Album, p. 136.

[19] MM, May 28, 1915, p. 56 (F 68).

> If, in some part of yourself, you are "wounded" or "killed" in order that man's right to mould the souls of their children in Christ and in freedom may finally triumph--if you are wounded, even by a ricochet or a spent bullet, in that great battle, why should you grieve?--Our Lord does not forget those who suffer in his service.[20]

Teilhard agrees that suffering is a Christian value, but he is keeping it in the context of effort and struggle for an ideal or goal. In such an effort it should make no difference whether pain is directly inflicted upon us by our own personal failure or defeat or we suffer obliquely through our association with others in the struggle. Whatever the case, its value is still present for our personal development in God's plan.

Marguerite found the lack of clarity in her own vocation an especially heavy burden to bear. Perhaps Teilhard talks as much to himself as to her when he urges the need for patience.[21] He points out that it is a human trait to want to reach the goal without passing through the necessary intermediate stages. The law of progress, however, requires some stages of instability and these periods may last a rather long time. We cannot hasten the maturity of our ideas. Time, a concept in which Teilhard includes God's grace and the circumstances affecting one's good will, must be accepted at its present value. He encourages Marguerite to believe that God's hand is guiding her through the obscurity and period of "becoming." As a sign of her love of God, she should accept the anxiety of feeling herself in suspense and incomplete. Then with all the preceding advice as background, Teilhard zeroes in on Marguerite's uneasiness at not leading a recognized religious way of life. It is true, he grants, that a certain logic and necessity causes the majority of men, who respond to a call of a total giving of their lives to God, to group themselves into a community. Although this is a common phenomenon, it is not a universal rule. Teilhard emphasizes that all ways of life can be made holy and "for each individual the ideal way is that to which our Lord leads him through the natural development of his tastes and the pressure of circumstances."[22]

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[20] Ibid., p. 57 (F 69).

[21] Ibid., July 4, 1915, p. 57 (F 70).

On the other hand, Teilhard cautions Marguerite against identifying the security of a religious with a reduction of activity. He stresses that "to canalize (direct) is not to reduce."[23] The surest principle for the truth of religion, Teilhard proposes, is that "it brings into action, that is, causes to rise up from sources deep within each one of us, a certain maximum of energy and effort."[24] The advantage of this principle lies in the personal balance which it produces. For when one's own personal effort is pushing oneself forward, it offsets any contrary forces that might delay or divert one's energies. According to Teilhard, Christian renunciation in following out a vocation should also be viewed in the light of this principle of action. Basic to every Christian life is the sacrifice we must make to overcome our own inertia and not to follow the line of least resistance. He counsels Marguerite not to bother about some theoretical renunciations but to begin "by devoting yourself to the fulfillment of the task, often thankless, assigned to you by God."[25] For Teilhard, a firm foundation and conviction in our God-given task is an essential for a spiritual development. God himself helps to make this base firm by his approval hidden in the ordinary circumstances of life and sometimes through a human counselor in whom one may find the consolation of being made aware of God's action. When Marguerite expresses envy for those people who seem so easily to make their eternal destiny an effective part of their everyday activity, Teilhard assures her that her own life is filled, though in a hidden way, with this kind of vision because "eternity comes into our conscious existence from the day when we 'set course' for God."[26] Realistically Teilhard observes that she will never be able to get rid of the countless small waverings which still alarm her because they make her course to God such a seemingly zig-zag one. The only way to keep working against such occurrences is a more intense application to activity along the vocational calling which is God's will.

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[22] Ibid., p. 58 (F 71).

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

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[25] MM, July 4, 1915, pp. 58-59 (F 71-72).

[26] Ibid.

In her effort to be a Catholic educator, Marguerite was troubled over certain aspects of the institutional Church. Apparently she was distressed that the Church, especially in the person of the Pope, did not explicitly condemn the German action in the First World War. Although Teilhard's remarks are in this particular context, they are general enough to demonstrate his attitude towards the institution which will only deepen and become more explicit in his own personal difficulties with the Roman authorities.

> Blessed are those who suffer at not seeing the Church so fair as they would wish and who are only the more submissive and prayerful for it. It is a profound grief, but of high spiritual value. It can never be repeated too often: the Catholic is the man who is sure of the existence of Jesus Christ.--There are motives that God is the master of, and in spite of many stumbling-blocks. Why is it that so many minds see nothing but the stumbling-blocks and wait until they have removed them before they look at the motives? We must be patient.--*Kultur* is an exceedingly complex theory. Who knows but that the Holy Father's reserve, which we feel so painfully, is not the touch of the brake needed to save us from a sectarian absolutism. . . .[27]

Even the mundane subject of a relaxing vacation is seen in the process of personal growth, when Teilhard encourages his cousin to take this necessary rest period in order to continue the activities which are her vocational task.[28] We need periods of relaxation, according to Teilhard, because of the slow and patient work required of a person, who himself has been borne along by a whole long past, and who now "humbly prepares a world he will never know."[29] Since results appear so slowly and usually after frequent setbacks and uncertainties, Teilhard continues to encourage Marguerite that these are the means which God uses to break into our lives more fully. Once again he stresses that a vision for our efforts is essential in order that we can look beyond our apparent environment and its pains and difficulties which may make people shut in upon themselves and embittered. Thanks to setbacks, he comforts her, she not only is thrown back a little more on God, but also she is made a little stronger in her ability to spread goodness. Teilhard explains this last point by saying that "charity, if it is to be inexhaustibly serene and loving, must have made the sacrifice of every reward to be looked for in human gratitude and affection."[30]

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 59 (F 72-73).

[28] *Ibid.*, July 27, 1915, p. 60 (F 73-74).

The sometimes necessary sacrifice of friendship does not mean that friends are unimportant or unnecessary. Human friendship makes life pleasanter, more harmonious, and gives a greater ease to action than isolation and rupture. Just on this pragmatic side, we should make personal efforts to develop strong friendships to save us from our weaknesses. When God breaks into even these values to wean our hearts more closely to himself, we should not complain. According to Teilhard, God is showing to Marguerite in this way that he wants more than "just a Christian woman." He cautions her, "since your activity has to be far reaching, it must emanate from a heart that has suffered: that is the law, and ultimately a kind law."[31]

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., Aug. 5-6, 1915, p. 63 (F 77).

Teilhard calls this kind of suffering a phase of transformation which "will resolve itself one day in the calm and fulfillment of the total abandonment to the will of God, when once that will has finally penetrated and won you."[32] Transformation, however, takes time--a time when there is much doubt and uncertainty, a time which requires great trust. During this period, Teilhard emphasizes the necessity of her rooting herself in a confidence which "becomes more tenacious and profound the more the shocks produced by external setbacks and the pseudo-natural bent of your mind tend to eat away your energy and make you slide back into sadness."[33] This confidence should be sought especially in the Eucharist--a joining oneself concretely into the Body of Christ. At this time, however, Teilhard had not clearly glimpsed the intimate connection between the physical reality of the Eucharist and the physical reality of the Body of Christ. But another aspect which will receive even greater natural clarity from his Christian evolutionary viewpoint is his emphasis on God's directing and summoning hand--particularized to working out one's personal vocation--and the necessary value of time--for growth, for transformation.

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[31] *Ibid.*, Aug. 22, 1915, p. 68 (F 83-84).

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*

Constant to his principle of using all the natural, human means as well as having a reliance upon God's help, Teilhard expresses a real concern for Marguerite's need for a spiritual director close-at-hand.[34] In the period of her difficulties, he is convinced that she must have support since she is too much on her own. Teilhard feels that he is too far away, and he is not convinced that he can be the most helpful in this particular situation. He suggests that she might go to a Sulpician Father Verdier (later Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris) whom she met during a retreat. When Marguerite demurs from laying bare her conscience to this priest, Teilhard sympathizes with her by agreeing that such a manifestation can be painful, but "the very act of doing so is salutary and brings solace."[35] The difficulty of such a manifestation should be offset by the great strength which is derived from the support of one in whom she can confide. While assuring her of his own assistance and prayers, he strongly urges her to reconsider "without in the least wanting to force your decision."[36] In the same letter, Teilhard proposes a sort of brief hand-rule for one's own discernment of spirits in personal growth. He expresses it in the following manner:

> Deep down in your soul, set above all things, immovably, as the basis of all your activity, as the criterion of the value and truth

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[34] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1915, pp. 75-76 (F 93-94).

[35] Ibid., Nov. 7, 1915, p. 80 (F 99-100).

[36] Ibid.

> of the thoughts that invade your mind, the Peace of God. Everything that contracts you and disturbs you is false--in the name of the laws of Life, in the name of the promises of God.[37]

Teilhard insists that she should hold fast to one criterion: to be faithful. Whether she should be the most saintly, the most loved and highly privileged Christian is not important, as long as she keeps trying to do her "poor best."

It will be almost a year later before Teilhard once more returns to the theme of discernment.[38] This time he explicitly refers to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In the Exercises, he writes, we find a principle that helps us to understand and judge ourselves. The principle concerns the calm and clarity which is ours when we pursue the truth. "It's trouble and anxiety (at least in the case of souls of good will) that are abnormal, are less true."[39] Even though she may be anxious at later times, Teilhard warns, she should not think that she was under illusion or that she should change the views she formed when her soul was at peace.

After a short visit back to Paris in late 1915, Teilhard writes about the happiness of knowing that a fresh understanding of their own friendship has resulted from this encounter. His criterion for a fruitful friendship, he tells her, is the progress we make of converging on Christ,

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., Oct. 20, 1916, p. 134 (F 172).

[39] Ibid.

"each from his own side, helping one another by prayer and effort to do better."[40] Because their friendship was precious, Teilhard tried to keep his cousin from putting too great an emphasis just on their times of being together. He speaks of friendship more as a musical note which gives a certain tone to their whole life. His prayer is that both of them will find their friendship wholly transformed into a force which leads to God, "with nothing wasted in fruitless mutual gratification (which would be a waste of energy and love)."[41] One of his greatest happinesses, Teilhard admits, is to know that he had really helped her to be a little more for God and in God.[42]

Marguerite continued to find it difficult to believe that what she was doing was of real value. After first telling her not to worry, Teilhard questions her whether it is not enough to foster large ambitions and try loyally to accomplish them, but always relying on God for their ultimate success.[43] For only God can give real existence to what our actions produce. "And is he not therefore, ipso facto, one of the very conditions of our appetite for activity?"[44] Teilhard encourages Marguerite in the urge she feels to make something real since he sees in this a way that God commands and strengthens our faith, much more than by any abstract reasoning. In a later letter, Teilhard takes up again this theme of faith.[45] When his cousin is experiencing a period of calm and pleasant existence, Teilhard reminds her that a faith is just as necessary when she faces an agreeable future as when it is a worrying kind. He suggests a translation of the phrase, "*fides, substantia sperandarum rerum,*" from the Epistle to the Hebrews as: "faith is the element that stabilizes and divinizes our future--it creates it, for each one of us, to the measure of our own salvation and our own particular chosen destiny."[46]

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[40] Ibid., Dec. 2, 1915, p. 81 (F 101).

[41] Ibid., July 25, 1917, pp. 197-98 (F 257).

[42] Ibid., Aug. 28, 1918, p. 230 (F 299).

[43] Ibid., Aug. 5, 1917, pp. 198-99 (F 258).

[44] Ibid., Oct. 13, 1917, p. 210 (F 273).

There is a distinctive deepening of the counsel which Teilhard offers when his cousin's growth seems to indicate a further spiritual advance. Even Teilhard seems to recognize something like a new start. It is as if he were putting aside the past and pointing out the basic essential for spiritual development. The first point he stresses is a period, if only a few minutes, of meditation each day "so that you may *regain contact* with the mystical environment in which we both wish to live and act."[47] The second point is a warning that she should not be shaken by any weakness or apparent stagnation of spirit, but rather she should make it an occasion of greater faith in God's providence. He underlines the fundamental passion for living: "to feel that God is realized everywhere, in us, and around us."[48] As long as this transformation continues to take place in our lives, we should not be anxious about the annoying or discordant details that persist despite our never-ending struggle against them. In fact, in God's providence, these very difficulties can serve to bring about the substitution of our Lord into the deepest part of our person. Substitution, which implies total replacement, is a less adequate choice of expression than Teilhard's usual transformation. For, as Teilhard will explain more fully in his later essays, it is the point of balance attained through our efforts, matched by the external forces hindering us, that allows us to be open to God's transformation. It is in this sense that Teilhard rejoices in Marguerite's appreciation for sacrifice. He suggests quite plainly that she has passed through the circle of human attractions and has thereby been strengthened in her power to give and in her capacity for detachment. Now she is beginning to make her way into the circle of divine union--what Teilhard later describes as the divine milieu. Once God has become the supreme reality in the universe, there can logically be no more profound happiness than to feel this reality painfully drawing to himself one's own being--"in so far as that being has been faithful in shaping and developing itself."[49] Teilhard rejoices in her longing for a certain isolation and interior silence because he feels that, in God's movement of drawing her closer to himself, the two of them as cousins and friends are united in a union which "grows endlessly closer and knows no more what it is to be separated."[50] As the appetite for God gradually subsumes all other appetites which we experience in the fulfillment of our person, we find ourselves passionately interested even in the most commonplace and tedious circumstances of life. On another occasion, Teilhard describes the appetite for God as a concern to make God reign over all things. It must not be only an intention, "a more or less extrinsic object of desire--but also an habitual guiding force behind all our actions (even the most trifling), which are then made as perfectly as possible in order that God may dwell more intensely in our souls and, through them, in everything else too."[51] Although Teilhard himself does not apply the word passion to this "appetite for God," it does fulfill the overreaching aim of the passionate life, as he saw it.

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[45] *Ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1918, p. 232 (F 301-302).

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] *Ibid.*, Sept. 27, 1918, pp. 239-40 (F 312).

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[48] MM, Nov. 7, 1918, p. 249 (F 325).

[49] Ibid., Nov. 13, 1918, pp. 251-52 (F 328).

Only one month later, Teilhard is writing to convince Marguerite that the life of our Lord never triumphs more within us than when we suffer diminishment within him.[52] As she begins to have a real problem with her health (she will be forced to retire from teaching in 1922 because of sickness), Teilhard comforts her with his prayers for her recovery.[53]

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[50] Ibid., Dec. 8, 1918, p. 263 (F 343-44).

[51] Ibid., Dec. 10, 1918, p. 264 (F 344-45).

[52] Ibid., Jan. 5, 1919, pp. 271-72 (F 354-55).

[53] Ibid., Jan. 11, 1919, pp. 274-75 (F 359).

He points out that she must neglect nothing in seeking a cure and at the same time she should be open to the power of God who uses the effect of a painful and ordinary trial to make her more his own. Teilhard confesses, "in spite of the fundamental, prime, importance I've always been led to attribute to human effort and development, I realize that the soul begins to know God only when it is forced really to suffer diminishments within him."[54] The darkness which a period of trial causes the soul can be penetrated only by the light of our Lord. And so Teilhard prays that his cousin may enjoy soon this light which can animate the whole complex of exterior events and interior experiences.[55] On Good Friday, 1919, Teilhard reflects on the trust that we must put in Christ "who can cause every diminution we suffer to be transformed into a growth of life in him."[56] He expands the meaning of the Cross as follows:

> I've been struck by the insistence with which the Church constantly repeats the final refrain "Christus factus est obediens usque ad mortem crucis." That's obviously the exact and profound significance of the cross: obedience, submission to the law of life. To work patiently until death--and to accept everything, in a spirit of love, including death: there you have the essence of Christianity.[57]

It is to this heart of Christian living that Teilhard has guided Marguerite in her vocation and now he can only pray that her peace will withstand every trial and every monotony and that, wherever she may be, she will continue to make the effort to live "in the light."

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., Feb. 1, 1919, p. 280 (F 366); Feb. 12, 1919, pp. 282-83 (F 369).

[56] Ibid., Good Friday (April 20), 1919, p. 293 (F 383).

[57] Ibid., p. 294 (F 384).

Léontine Zanta

Léontine Zanta was a brilliant woman, author, and teacher--the first of her sex with a doctorate degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne. She was in the forefront of the women's rights movement in France, and her reputation became well known throughout Europe. Teilhard de Chardin became her friend through his participation in the intellectual circle which gathered as her regular soirée (including such scholars as Henri Bremond, Henri Bergson, and Father A.-J. Sertillange, O.P.). Teilhard's cousin, Marguerite, was also her close friend, especially because of the mutual interest in women's education. Mademoiselle Zanta became fired with enthusiasm for Teilhard's vision, and through her questioning, commenting, and criticizing, played a certain part in its more precise structure. But our interest in the correspondence between these two people is more directed to the very personal side of a woman seeking advice and support in order that she might live a fuller and holier life in the vocation she had chosen.

Their correspondence extends from May 26, 1923 through February 11, 1939. It is marked by a warmth and affection, which emphasizes repeatedly the importance of human support and love. The letters are taken up with surprisingly little of external events and occupations. Rather the discussion centers around such key ideas as God-above-all, an always forward movement in life, the value of effort, the necessity of effort for the completion of the world, the role of Christianity and the Church as the "home" of these efforts, and the importance of persons in personalizing the universe for fulfillment in the Person of Christ. It is in this context, then, that we review Teilhard's attempt to strengthen a woman's effort in carrying out her vocation and to console her in the diminishments which she had to face in her struggle.

In the first extant letter, written from China, Teilhard encourages Léontine Zanta to find sacrifice in her life by offering to God her intelligence and her activity.[58] Her thinking and writing should be as intense as possible, only bending before the limitations which come inevitably from God. The secret of peace in this attempt to expand her personality lies in perceiving the "One Thing necessary" which encloses everything else in its circle of being and influence. According to Teilhard, the ability to find God takes place, through his help, by our fidelity to life and by a faith in the divine presence and operation which is transforming everything. Teilhard does not deny that there will be periods of depression even in the midst of such a life bent on seeking God.[59] The most basic solution, he proposes, is never to doubt the value of one's own effort. Her great prayer should always be that she might continue, as a philosopher, to think the better.

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[58] Zanta, May 26, 1923, p. 50 (F 54).

[59] Ibid., Aug. 7, 1923, p. 55 (F 59).

Teilhard warmly supports her in her idea of searching for the divine unity through the whole of human effort. The truth of such a vocation is to be found between God and her. For Teilhard, no certitude, no human understanding can go against the awareness that she has to grow greater in the light and strength of the vocation she has chosen. When she gives the criterion for truth in life as "the power to render ourselves coherent in our very striving," Teilhard agrees that this is truth not pragmatically defined, but recognized in its consistency and its value apart from our own success.[60] He advises her to obtain a copy of the meditation book written by his good friend, Father Pierre Charles, S.J., because it is so full of ideas which will be helpful in living out the kind of truth she has described.[61] We might note that Teilhard himself retains this notion of truth based on consistency and coherence.

Having set up her ideal, Mademoiselle Zanta became anxious in her ability to live up to it. In this period of fear, Teilhard comforts her with the thought that God needs only one thing for the success of the immense work of creation: "that you have done your best."[62] For her own life to be fulfilled, she has only to take the place willed by God;

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[60] Ibid., Oct. 3, 1923, p. 56 (F 61).

[61] Ibid. The meditation book to which Teilhard refers in Pierre Charles, S.J., Prayer for All Times (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1949).

[62] Zanta, Dec. 12, 1923, p. 60 (F 65).

this is marked, at every instant, by the balance which is established between our effort to succeed and develop ourselves and the resistance of all the elements which limit our energies. Our very weakness should intensify our intention and our faith because our strength must be found in God. Metaphysically, Teilhard agrees, the universe might trample under foot all our efforts, and, if the survival of consciousness were considered in isolation, there could be some doubt about the continued form of existence.[63] He advises her that it is by faith she will experience the coherence of life in the vast movement of the universe. All he can do is to try to share with her his own experience of being peacefully settled in the midst of the divine milieu.

Teilhard cautions her that she should always maintain time for contact with God and time for serious thought, no matter how busy she may be.[64] He assures her that various setbacks in life are all to be accepted as part of God's plan, and our prayer must be that we can maintain this attitude without any bitterness.[65] But truly to call such an attitude our own, we must learn to exclude no exterior or interior forces--neither death nor the persecution of any of our ideas. For a believer, Teilhard repeats, everything is transformable in our Lord.

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[63] Ibid., p. 61 (F 66).

[64] Ibid., Jan. 25, 1924, p. 63 (F 69).

[65] Ibid., May 20, 1924, p. 67 (F 73).

He then sums up what he terms as his exhaustive and unassailable formula for a Christian life: "to be in communion, through our fidelity, with the world made holy by faith."[66] The more we make such a formula a part of our living, the more hesitant we will be to disdain any part of our existence. Her own involvement in life, Teilhard suggests, mirrors an ideal of men passionately devoted to a cult of the Real advancing them towards God.[67] Teilhard speculates that this involvement may be the way of our own age just as St. Francis set an example of pure detachment for his times.

The advice which Teilha [illegible] tine Zanta is more intellectual in nature than [illegible] ce. When he shares his own experience, he [illegible] unicating with an equal--one who was jus [illegible] n as he was in his. This was not true of his [illegible] erite. In the process of gradually explaining his [illegible] length, Teilhard spends less and less time on direct perso [illegible] nsel. He continues discretely to encourage her activity in teaching and writing, the necessity of prayer in her life, and the ability to rise above difficulties in friendship, publication, and the Church. The one comfort which Teilhard offers as a constant theme in their letters is the emphasis on faith.[68] It is the faith which

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1926, p. 72 (F 79).

[68] Ibid., Aug. 22, 1928, pp. 80-81 (F 89-90).

He then sums up what he terms as his exhaustive and unassailable formula for a Christian life: "to be in communion, through our fidelity, with the world made holy by faith."[66] The more we make such a formula a part of our living, the more hesitant we will be to disdain any part of our existence. Her own involvement in life, Teilhard suggests, mirrors an ideal of men passionately devoted to a cult of the Real advancing them towards God.[67] Teilhard speculates that this involvement may be the way of our own age just as St. Francis set an example of pure detachment for his times.

The advice which Teilhard writes to Léontine Zanta is more intellectual in nature than in his other correspondence. When he shares his own experience, he gives the impression of communicating with an equal--one who was just as strongly set in her vocation as he was in his. This was not true of his counsel to his cousin Marguerite. In the process of gradually explaining his own vision at greater length, Teilhard spends less and less time on direct personal counsel. He continues discretely to encourage her activity in teaching and writing, the necessity of prayer in her life, and the ability to rise above difficulties in friendship, publication, and the Church. The one comfort which Teilhard offers as a constant theme in their letters is the emphasis on faith.[68] It is the faith which enables us to walk on the waters of the ocean of life, so that the fog around us eventually disappears. It is the faith required when others do not share with us our viewpoints and ideals. In fact, Teilhard hammers home again, the disbelief or indifference of others should be only the occasion for the strengthening of our faith.[69] Basically the comfort and consolation in our lives, according to Teilhard, must come from our faith. Appropriately enough, the last extant letter from Teilhard to Mademoiselle Zanta is taken up with the notion of the immortality of the soul.[70] Somewhat earlier he had written that "the beyond" is a frightening mystery.[71] And yet, he assures her, how can we better prepare than by serving passionately for God and in God this universe? Under Teilhard's influence, Léontine Zanta lived such a faith until her death in June, 1942.

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1926, p. 72 (F 79).

[68] Ibid., Aug. 22, 1928, pp. 80-81 (F 89-90).

Two Friends

In the volume entitled, Letters to Two Friends 1926-1952, we possess a collection of letters written by Teilhard to two women, both living in America and both wishing to remain anonymous at the time of publication. One set of letters was written in French, the other in

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[69] Ibid., Sept. 28, 1928, p. 84 (F 94).

[70] Ibid., undated (1939), pp. 119-20 (F 134-35).

[71] Ibid., Feb. 7, 1930, p. 101 (F 112).

English.[72] The idea behind the editing of the letters was to produce a kind of "Journal of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin."[73] Our own purpose has a different emphasis since once again we are looking to the kind of help and consolation which Teilhard extends to others, rather than just the facts and feelings of his own daily existence. The first group of letters betrays a much greater concern and they are the occasion of more personal advice than the second group.

At the beginning of the correspondence, Teilhard is writing much more as a "solver of problems" than as a counselor of personal growth. The first letters are written shortly after Teilhard's enforced exile to China. He is trying to reassure his correspondent that the defects of the institutional Church must be tolerated, even as we react to them, "because for now they are inseparable from what seems to be the only axis along which human activity can legitimately progress."[74] He compares all the ritual, disciplinary, and theological encrustations to musical or acoustical theories; the former matters as little to the true Christian attitude as the latter does to the enjoyment of a beautiful piece of music.

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[72] The first group of letters, originally written in French, take in the years 1926-1952; the second group which Teilhard wrote in English--at times a little awkward in expression--encompass the years 1938-1950. In the text, the first group of letters runs from page 21 to page 117; the second group, from page 119 to page 218.

[73] Cf. "Prologue," by René d'Ouince, S.J., TF, p. 3.

[74] TF, June 11, 1926, p. 30.

> In any case, for you, as for everyone, there is only one road that can lead to God, and this is the fidelity to remain constantly true to yourself, to what you feel is highest in you. Do not worry about the rest. The road will open before you as you go.[75]

A far more basic difficulty is taken up in the succeeding letter. It is the whole question of how to make sense of the immensity of the universe and our ideas about God and approach to him.[76] The Divine Milieu was written for just such a questioner. In this more personal response, Teilhard suggests that a deeper understanding of spirit as the eminent value and the ultimate connection of all the substances of the world provides a solution. He assures her that she is right in her opinion that we cannot truly distinguish God's features. But he immediately adds that since the human being with his intelligence and ability to love is the most perfect form we know among the elements of the world, "we say that God must be conceived in the direction of a super-person (that is, an extension of the good qualities--and not of the individual limitations--of the human being)."[77] This idea of God some years later will be called by Teilhard the "supreme personal." He now describes God as vast as the universe and as warm as the human heart and more besides.

In taking up a certain semantic difficulty in regard to faith, Teilhard writes that when we speak of the need for faith in our approach to God, we do not mean need in an accessory, secondary, and debatable sense. Rather we are talking about a need so fundamental and universal "that it is part of the very essence of life 'which is in us without being us.' "[78] Teilhard grants that for some, faith may be accompanied by some compelling belief, by evidence, and by joy. For himself, he understands faith more as a calm vision or worldview by which "everything is illuminated and becomes livable, indefinitely, increasingly."[79] This act of faith requires "both a passive sensitization of the mind in order to see and a positive act of the will in order to try to achieve the point of view."[80] Of course, faith so affects the approach to life that nothing is insignificant or profane. Even personally, such a worldview takes us out of our narrow, closed-in vision. Teilhard further explains:

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[75] Ibid., p. 31.

[76] Ibid., June 13, 1926, pp. 31-33.

[77] Ibid., p. 32.

> The death of egoism is to understand that one is an element in a Universe that personalizes itself (if I may) by uniting itself with God (I do not say, by becoming God). So it is no longer oneself that one loves in oneself.[81]

In a later letter, Teilhard returns to this theme of self-love when he congratulates his correspondent on her adaptation of the principle, "Spirit through Matter."[82] The principle seems so essential to him that he does not understand "how a man who has not understood it can live fully and consciously without falling (or without being unable to explain why he does not fall) into either the Charybdis of pleasure and gross egoism, or the Scylla of a false and debilitating asceticism."[83] Teilhard admits that the greatest difficulty is in applying the principle to one's own life. For he pictures every individual placed on a material slope leading to spirit (an image he develops in The Divine Milieu) and each one has to embrace and attack matter from the point where he finds himself.

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p. 33.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., Oct. 30, 1926, p. 47-49.

Some time later, Teilhard is involved in a discussion about the love of neighbor. He sympathizes with his correspondent's antipathy for men-in-general. In his own analysis, he is of the opinion that the feeling of hostility arise in us because we see in our fellowman another world, "a rival world to our own, that is, the one centered around us."[84] Because each man can possess a different worldview from our own, we feel threatened. Hoping that his correspondent will profit from his own experience, Teilhard outlines his method of working against this feeling of antipathy. He suggests either looking at man impersonally--an element placed in the Noosphere like a drop of water in the sea or an atom in matter ("why do you not love the Noosphere if you love the sea and the sky?")[85] --or considering man personally, "in Him in whom, for the Christian faith, all are and shall be physically *one* (but here again, as in mutual affection, plurality, *the other*, disappears as a rival, and survives only as the increase that it brings)."[86] Once we have done away with the rival-concept, Teilhard is convinced, we find our aversion ceases since we have brought the other back into our unity.

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[83] Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[84] Ibid., March 13, 1927, p. 63.

[85] Ibid.

In a subsequent letter, Teilhard cautions her that a Christian attitude of love for all men or certain humanitarian hopes for a one-world-society should not blind us to the possibility that "the 'human stratum' may not be homogeneous."[87] Although he confesses that the prospect of an inborn biological or psychological inequality among races is disturbing, we as Christians should recognize that the real way to conquer the world is "to utilize its faults, and not to deny them, *if* they are irremediable."[88] Realizing the controversial nature of his observations, Teilhard asks his correspondent to think about what he proposes, for a Christian attitude must be open and accepting of whatever concrete facts future research may uncover and for that reason our love must be no less real. Teilhard shares with her his insight that at the present time it is the task of humanity as a collectivity to become more sensitive, more receptive, and more free. He holds up the hope of a whole group of new St. Francises--"broader, more aggressive, and more modern than he was in their way of loving the World, but just as logical and nonconformist as he was in the practice of their ideal."[89]

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[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.*, April 6, 1927, p. 68.

[88] *Ibid.*

Into the middle of a correspondence that has seen Teilhard's counsel more on the theoretical or intellectual side, we come upon a letter that is striking in its personal spiritual depth.[90] The occasion is the serious illness of the correspondent's loved one. Teilhard expresses his own deep concern and love in his wish that he were more than a man so that he could reassure her and could heal the person she loves so much. He turns to the power of prayer since this desire, hope, and supplication for immediate and tangible well-being is our first duty, "as the Gospel itself teaches us."[91] Having assured her of his own concern and their union together in prayer for a recovery, Teilhard prudently tries to form a more open attitude on her part. He points out realistically that nothing in our universe can absolutely resist the forces of death. Her own love of life he strongly commends as a healthy and magnificent power which strengthens her spirit of resistance to physical diminishments and helps her to bear suffering. But Teilhard counsels her that there is something still lacking in her attitude: "you do not yet sufficiently love all of Life, all of the Universe, to agree, once the inevitable moment has come, to diminish (in appearance) and to pass lovingly into it."[92] She should not misunderstand this approach as a failure in our struggle against death, but rather she should consider it as a call of faith to abandon ourselves ultimately to death as to a falling into a greater life.

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[89] Ibid., April 30, 1927, p. 71.

[90] Ibid., Oct. 2, 1927, pp. 78-79.

[91] Ibid., p. 78.

> To love Life so much, and to trust it so completely, that we embrace it and throw ourselves into it even in death--this is the only attitude that can calm and fortify you: to love extravagantly what is greater than oneself. Every union, especially with a greater power, involves a kind of death of the self. Death is acceptable only if it represents the physically necessary passage toward a union, the condition of a metamorphosis.[93]

From this time onward, the predominant theme in personal advice is summed up in Teilhard's phrase, "faith in Life." His wish is that life might become for her not some blind fatality but a kind of living Presence or Benevolence "in which it will be possible for you not only to trust but to confide."[94] He points to his own example as an attempt to surrender actively to a world which he understands "less and less in detail (in the sense that the traditional explanations that people give of it seem more and more inadequate), but whose 'divinization' or 'personalization' seems clearer to me every day."[95] His one interest and goal rests in the act of fidelity to life. And he asks her to try it. She should learn to love and to accept serenely all those events which are beyond our control and which thwart our action. This kind of fidelity to life does not depend on social success or on a tangible result. Teilhard questions her whether she doesn't assume that an existence that doesn't take root or become fruitful in some tangible work is less valuable than one which does. He proposes that the world might well make use of both kinds of people--the stable producers and the mobile creatures "whose action takes the form of a series of seemingly unrelated trials or tests cutting across all kinds of areas."[96] But for a person not to have a place to lay his head, he cautions, requires a great deal of faith in one's heart. Sometime later, Teilhard relates his idea of a "faith in Life," to a saying in Scripture (which, he claims, he is not in the habit of quoting), that "it is faith that conquers the World."[97] If she learns to smile at life, he stresses, it will be a triumphant smile which proclaims her faith not only that she will survive but that she will be saved by what seems to be destroying her.

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[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

[93] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[94] *Ibid.*, Aug. 18, 1934, p. 83.

[95] *Ibid.*

It is faith above all that is one of the profoundest structural laws of the universe because it gives the universe a Face.[98] It is faith, moreover, which gives us the confidence to ride out the storms of life.[99]

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[96] Ibid.

[97] TF, undated (ca. 1935), pp. 86-87.

[98] Ibid., Aug. 13, 1948, p. 106; also March 31, 1950, p. 112.

[99] Ibid., Dec. 3, 1948, p. 107.

Teilhard encourages her to work at faith continuously, rekindling, nourishing, and fortifying it by her activity in a world-in-genesis.[100] Gradually the faith, according to Teilhard, is seen more in its aspect of hope for the future. He prays that she will be turned more and more to that future, following the order which he has given to himself of "no retreat."[101] The future, he claims, belongs to a faith or religion which will place hope above pity--he quickly adds, "without diminishing the latter, quite the contrary!"[102] Pity can be only a relief for the wrongs of the past, with no attempt at their future correction; speculation can be only abstract reasoning about a possible future. More than pity and more than speculation, Teilhard asks her to try to believe passionately in the world's future and so to throw herself into the present-day struggle.[103] In this advice, we see Teilhard's call to the coherence of the forward and the upward.

In the final letter of this correspondence, Teilhard congratulates her on her calm in the face of a debilitating sickness.[104] She has acquired more and more completely the confidence and surrender which marks a Christian vision. He closes with the prayer that both of them may grow "in the Vision and the Presence of this Unique Necessity through all the successes and failures of our lives."[105] As we have seen more formally, this ultimate balance of activity and passivity is to find true personal development in the divine milieu envisioned by Teilhard.

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[100] Ibid., July 19, 1949, p. 109.

[101] Ibid., Sept. 1, 1949, p. 110.

[102] Ibid., May 29, 1950, p. 113.

[103] Ibid., July 25, 1950, p. 113.

[104] Ibid., Jan. 16, 1952, p. 117.

The second group of letters, written in English, provide us with comparatively few examples of Teilhard's role as counselor and comforter. From various indications in the letters, it could be surmised that Teilhard's woman correspondent did not share his religion.[106] The emphasis, we will find, is on personal development and effort. In one of the early letters, Teilhard refers to the results of certain recent experiences (otherwise unidentified) upon his correspondent's personal growth.[107] As usual, he advocates a great trust in life. There is a certain infallibility in the success of life if only she is careful in selecting those influences or those paths which can bring her each time a little more upward. It requires a belief that the world is going somewhere, and then she will feel the strength to build her life step-by-step. Later in the same year, Teilhard wonders what her next step in life will be.[108] He remembers her imminent decision in his prayers that she might find the path which will lead her to the highest and truest development of herself. His advice is summed up in three points, which are now familiar to us: (1) keep the right direction--upwards; (2) hope for perpetual discovery--forward; and (3) trust life--faith and vision. He warns her not to make a decision on what she wants out of life on the basis of her own conspicuous success.[109] It's rather a matter of doing ordinary things with the perception of their enormous (even though unseen) value. When failure and suffering do enter into life, Teilhard bluntly states that the value of sacrifice and pain is simply to pay for some useful conquest, and the true meaning of the Cross is "toward progress through effort."[110]

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[105] Ibid.

[106] For example, TF, March 30, 1939, p. 129; Aug. 2, 1939, p. 132; April 8, 1940, p. 141.

[107] Ibid., Jan. 16, 1939, p. 127.

[108] Ibid., Oct. 6, 1939, p. 134.

In the following year, Teilhard observes that they are both in the same circumstances: accepting lovingly and patiently the thread of life wherever it may lead.[111] He is more convinced than ever that fidelity to life is the only and highest form of holiness. The final letter of this unpublished correspondence re-states the basic Teilhardian viewpoint. Teilhard is responding to a line from the Gospel of the previous Sunday: "do not worry about material things . . . God will provide."[112] He is generally critical of this theme of the Gospel because people are so inclined to interpret it as a "warning that the further development of Earth and Man is not in the genuine line of Christianity."[113] He agrees, however, with his correspondent's interpretation, which is that God will provide for those who care for him more than for themselves. This is the meaning which she finds applicable to her life at this particular time, and Teilhard concurs in her discernment. For ultimately, in the Teilhardian scheme, this kind of a reading of the Gospel text marks the Christian attitude of a total surrender to God's entrance through diminishment, only after the struggle has been made to complete a little more of the world for God.

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[109] Ibid., March 21, 1941, p. 156.

[110] Ibid., Sept. 18, 1948, p. 187.

[111] Ibid., Feb. 22, 1949, p. 199.

[112] Ibid., Sept. 8, 1950, p. 218.

Various Individuals

To conclude our view of Teilhard as a counselor and consoler, we will consider some individual letters which have been published in various books or periodicals.

One group of letters, more extensive than the rest, is addressed to Max Bégouen, with whom a deep friendship developed from the time of their association in the First World War. Max was the son of Count Henri Bégouen, an eminent geologist, whom Teilhard had met during the time of his Paris studies, 1912-1914. After the war, Max and Teilhard had personal contact only infrequently because of Bégouen's career in Morroco and French Guinea. The correspondence is unique in that it pictures Teilhard counseling a holiness in the concrete circumstances of the business world.

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[113] *Ibid.*

In 1928, Teilhard writes to encourage Max in his struggle to succeed in his professional circles.[114] The way to sanctify matter is to mold it "religiously" through our own human effort. The opposition Max experiences is all the more reason for his immersion into these troubling waters, which are meant to be his baptism into sanctification. His very efforts to develop his little part of the world increases the holiness in things before the eyes of God. A little later, Teilhard is stressing the necessity of his believing all the harder in his own efforts of being personally enriched and divinized to the measure of faithful activity.[115] What is the worst weakness among men, according to Teilhard, is that they do not have enough daring to believe, nor do they believe over a long enough period, nor is their belief open enough in its embrace. If only one element is made an exception to our faith--whether it be a particular failure, or death, or rigidity of an institution or an individual person--and only one minute of time or a certain openness is lacking, then our whole life of faith is shaken and is likely to collapse. The total faith-life, which Teilhard envisions, has no boundaries or limits.

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[114] M. Bégouen, "Témoignage," ca. Aug. 29, 1928, Cahier, II, 20-21.

[115] Ibid., April 27, 1929, p. 21.

After a couple months, Teilhard is enthusiastic over Max's pursuit of the spiritual in all things.[116] Max, however, is discouraged by the problem of christianizing money and the problem of getting a large group of people to share the same feelings. First of all, Teilhard cautions him in general that an individual vision cannot be put into practice without great difficulty and numerous obstacles from those who do not share one's vision. We are part of a community, and the community changes slowly. Teilhard is speaking here from his own experience. He points out that Max will have to live for some time partly paralyzed in his activity and misunderstood by the people around him. But history shows that such a person will eventually animate the whole group by his fidelity to his vision. Specifically, both the problem of money and of public feeling are tied up with this disharmony, this delay, between the individual awakening (which Max himself experiences) and the collective awakening (which is so slowly produced). As Max himself had complained, the conquest of money at the present time is for the most part bound up with some immoral practices. But Teilhard asks himself whether this phase of accumulation does not stem from a more basic "accumulation" of personal excesses and egoisms. In his opinion, the struggle to make money in itself is no more immoral than any other kind of competition. The race and competition among men, he observes, is without doubt inevitable and even healthy. Yet "everything should be surrendered with a greater passion to a greater than oneself."[117] Teilhard grants that the worldly wise think that this view is pure myth. So he warns Max that he will not be able to live up entirely to his ideal about the Christian conquest of money any more than an isolated State could disarm itself entirely. But Teilhard doesn't want him to despair just because the world can only be converted--not individual by individual--but only all at once to a disinterested use of money just as it can be turned only as a whole--and not nation by nation--to a beautiful pacifism. Still, even the conversion of the whole must be prepared by individual attempts. Right at present, then, the use of money, which is part of the life-blood of human activity, is eminently spiritualizable, like everything else human.

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[116] Ibid., June 17, 1929, pp. 22-23.

Later in the same year, Teilhard compliments Max on his spiritual life because of the evidence of its deepening influence on his daily life.[118] He sympathizes with the anxious concern that moves him to exert his new powers in the best way possible for God. For his own peace and courage, Teilhard urges him to remember that he would have sufficient justification for his existence even if he did not succeed in doing as much good as he had hoped. "So long as our being is tensed, directed with passion, towards that which is the spirit in all things, then that spirit will emerge from our own hidden, nameless effort."[119] Teilhard summons Max to a greater trust that whatever influence he may have is justified just by his own personal development and through him, then, is borne part of the world's homage to God. We must pray, Teilhard notes, that God may aid us in this faith and trust of building the world for him.

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., Nov. 11, 1929, pp. 23-24; a section is included in LT, pp. 117-18.

[119] Ibid.

Teilhard can appreciate the difficulty which anyone has in reconciling his ordinary daily life with full Christian development. When Max Bégouen questions the relation between successful business and moral progress, Teilhard answers that the spiritual success of the universe is bound up with the correct functioning of every zone and particularly with the release of every possible energy in it.[120] But we should try to maintain a habitual perspective of working, at least indirectly, for the building up of the Body of Christ. Of course, Teilhard is quick to press the point, not only is our work valuable, but there is also the value of the actual doing, "which by its fidelity creates in us the personality expected of us by Christ."[121] Knowing that he is doing his best, in Teilhard's opinion, gives him the right to be truly joyful because it is not the joy of Max in the world but the joy of the world in Max. Teilhard is re-stating here his basic distinction between an egoistic individualism and a personal development growing out of union. Teilhard's advice is to search for the greatest in everything which life presents as the most highly human. "Be satisfied only by the taste for the infinite recognized in all the foods of the earth."[122] Teilhard makes the comparison of spiritual growth with the physical growth of our bodies, which happens spontaneously in favorable circumstances. He tries to share with Max his own state of indifference--an indifference which accepts individual lay or ecclesiastic agitations or interferences as less real than the future unions towards which we are moving. This future orientation is necessary for human growth and progress in the face of all obstacles and setbacks. Gradually, then, Teilhard has laid out before Max his vision of personal development.

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[120] Ibid., April 8, 1930, pp. 25-26; a section is included in LT, pp. 119-20.

[121] Ibid.

Some vignettes follow, culled from letters to various correspondents. The first we will consider deals with Teilhard's counsel on making a vision one's own. In his advice to Claude Rivière (a talented young French woman who gave literary talks on the radio), Teilhard demands that prayer, patience, and right intention must be set within a personal vision.[123] For himself, he claims that this vision lies in a certain passionate perspective of matter; for her, he proposes that it would rest in a certain lyrical and aesthetic perspective of the world. She should not try to be different than she is, and concretely this means that the sum of all her past experiences is capable of being spiritualized. According to Teilhard, "nothing in the past is useless, or empty, or regrettable, provided that you gather and remodel everything in an act of forward-looking 'communion.' "[124] And so Teilhard sums up all life experiences in the coherence of his worldview.

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[122] Ibid.

[123] Letter to Claude Rivière, Dec. 8, 1942, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 257.

In our second cameo, we are considering Teilhard's advice in the area of a passivity of growth--the recognition of the limits on one's comfort and counsel. From all the experience he had as a priest and celibate religious in dealing with women, Teilhard wrote this advice to a close friend and a sometime co-worker, Pierre Lamare.[125] Although he valued his many deep friendships with women, he was acutely conscious of his responsibility, not only to himself, but to them.

> One knows oneself, and one is master to some extent of one's own suffering. But what does one know about the forces one may unloose in someone else; forces that one cannot satisfy? The only possible friend . . . is one who finds elsewhere, deep within herself, a serious stability in a full life, or in some great ideal.[126]

For one who is so conscious of the needs of comfort and consolation, Teilhard was a realist who also recognized that there would be times when he or another could not and even should not help because of an unfortunate emotional involvement, one-sided though it may be.

The following three exchanges are all in the context of death and bereavement. To his mentor and friend, Abbé Breuil, Teilhard wrote a letter of sympathy upon the death of his mother.[127] First he offers Mass for her and for those she has left behind. Even though Breuil's mother's death was not unexpected, Teilhard notes that such a break with the past can still be quite a heartrending pain to accept. He recalls our Lord's words about once having put one's hand to the plough, never thereafter looking back. His own conviction is that individual events count for nothing; "all that really matters is devotion to something bigger than ourselves."[128] This advice follows Teilhard's practice of always trying to get the perspective of the whole. He expresses confidence that the Abbé will throw himself into his tasks in life with greater determination as a result of this trial. So the death of loved ones, in Teilhard's eyes, can and should lead to the further growth of one's own person.

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Letter to Pierre Lamare, March 17, 1930, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 212.

[126] Ibid.

Another letter of condolence written at the time of a death is addressed to Madame Solange Lemaître, a Protestant acquaintance who had gathered around her an ecumenical group, called the "_union des croyants_."[129] With a certain eye of a poet, Teilhard recalls the smile for which the two of them can no longer wait. Yet, being believers as they are, they do not lose heart or become bitter. He prays that she will not find the loss too painful to bear; at the same time he does recognize the pain that will be there. But he hopes that it will be the occasion for her to go forward more directly and always looking upward.

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[127] _LT,_ Oct. 23, 1923, pp. 62-63.

[128] _Ibid._

[129] Madame Solange Lemaître, "In Memoriam," Sept. 21, 1952, _Cahiers_, II, 155.

The same kind of hopeful letter--a summons to make ever greater efforts for growth--is found in a letter to the Barbour's (his fellow researcher in many of his field trips) on the death of their son in 1953.[130] He addresses George Barbour as "dear old friend," and responds "how I would that my love and my sympathy might lighten your sorrow, however little."[131] He recalls the statement of their fellow-geologist, Termier, who was accustomed to say at the time of great sorrow, in particular upon the death of one of his children, "whatever happens is to be adored."[132] Teilhard stresses that this is true at least for him who believes and sees that the entire development of the world is permeated by the power of love and unity. Because both George and his wife Dorothy can discern the divine milieu beneath all energy and events, what looks like a meaningless catastrophe will be transformed into a blessing for them and their other children. Again Teilhard makes it his wish and hope that, as a result of this trial, George will still find the taste for activity, and his vision will be even more purified so that he will be able to recognize and adore a higher form of love, in what has happened to his son.

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[130] Barbour, Field, Feb. 24, 1953, p. 147.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

Death, like diminishment, should be not only the occasion for development in the Teilhardian framework, but also a necessary part of a personal development. For this reason, while he consoles, he can encourage each one's passion to be passionately welcomed and even made an integral part of human growth. The time of stress, pain, and sorrow must be a time of prayer, friendly support, and most importantly a greater struggle to live passionately. For this is the law of Christian and personal growth.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN PASSION

> ". . . that God may be everything to everyone." I Cor 15:28.

Teilhard once described the personalization of the Christian in the coherence of three movements.[1] The Christian should participate in the hopes and the pains of his times--what Teilhard calls an "incarnation." The Christian should integrate this human force with the supernatural life in such a way as to develop a single effort towards the spiritualization of being--what he proposes as a coherence of the forward and the upward. The Christian should sublimate the human effort by making it reach towards higher forms of activity such as purity, contemplation, and death-in-God--what he suggests by a "transfiguration" or a transformation. Each individual movement is properly designated as the Christian passion. Yet all three, taken collectively, give a fuller and more complete picture of the Teilhardian use of passion.

From our study, we can appreciate that despite a sometimes highly intellectualized approach, Teilhard was not pre-eminently a theoretician of spirituality, but a practical man. "Life is fire, not wisdom!"[2] captures the spirit of his approach and gives insight into his own emphasis upon passion as a key to human and Christian living. In the essays and letters of Teilhard, passion becomes the expression of an attitude towards the whole of life, both to the world in which we live and to the God whom we adore. Passion does not express just an attitude, but it is a way of life. Because of his Catholic heritage, Teilhard could view passion with a totally new depth of dimension when the human passion for life was put into the context of Christ's Passion. All the pieces that fit together to make up the coherent picture of the Christian passion were only slowly gathered by Teilhard. Yet the inter-relatedness of many parts now makes our attempt at separate considerations seem quite artificial. Bowing to the impossibility of saying everything at once, however, we will proceed with a listing of various parts necessary for the makeup of that passion to which Teilhard calls all men.

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[1] Ecrits, "Note pour l'évangelisation des temps nouveaux," 1919, p. 380, footnote 16.

Vision and Direction

For a man to be impassioned, he must possess a vision. As a result, seeing or the ability to see is constantly highlighted in Teilhard's writings. In the preface of The Divine Milieu, he put forth his purpose in writing as "a way of teaching how to see."[3] The seeing, to which Teilhard so frequently refers and which he holds up as an ideal, is grasped in our own everyday expression, "Oh, now I see!" Seeing in this usage is an understanding, or perhaps, more correctly, an insight. In a thought movement similar to Socrates' "the unexamined life is not worth living," Teilhard proposes in a positive way that "the whole of life lies in that verb [to see]--if not ultimately, at least essentially."[4] According to Teilhard, to try to see more or better was a necessity of life, not just a matter of whim or curiosity. "*To see or to perish* is the very condition laid upon everything that makes up the universe, by reason of the mysterious gift of existence."[5] He discovered in evolution a direction from matter to spirit, from an emphasis on the complexity of the "without" to an emphasis on the corresponding consciousness of the "within"--in short, the growth of the ability to see.

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[2] TF, May 9, 1941, p. 157.

[3] DM, p. 15 (F 25).

The sources of Teilhard's vision were twofold: the world environment in which he lived which furnished him with the data for an all-encompassing evolutionary framework, and the Christian heritage which supplied him with the data of revelation and the ultimate meaning of man. From the evidence which he uncovered in his scientific investigations and from his religious training and prayerful reflection upon Scripture, particularly sections of St. John and St. Paul, he found a coherence in these sources about the direction of God's creation and man's strivings for personal development. It was a movement that was at once forward and upward.

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[4] *PM,* p. 35 (H 31; F 25).

[5] *Ibid.*

Matter and Spirit

Teilhardian passion, then, demands both a vision and a direction. At the same time it implies, through the fullness of meaning which he attributes to it, a coherence of matter and spirit, intention and action, attachment and detachment, activity and passivity. Traditionally passion has represented an external manifestation of the matter-spirit relation. Teilhard sharpened our focus on passion and viewed it as a particular breakthrough of the evolutionary drive or force on the level of mankind. Man is meant to make use of passion in his quest of becoming the person that he has the potential to be. Passion arises out of the material "without," which is man's evolutionary inheritance, and is the force which should drive him towards an ever greater growth of his "within," as he seeks fulfillment in the supreme personal. The dynamism of passion reaches its highest expression in the all-encompassing energy of love, leading to the true union of persons in the divine milieu. For this goal, "the mastery of passion in the service of spirit is a condition of progress."[6]

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[6] "L'évolution de la chasteté," 1934, ms., p. 14.

Intention and Action

Like matter and spirit, intention and action possess a new interrelation when interpreted in the light of Teilhard's stress on passion. Intention no longer appears quite so self-sufficient for the development of the good man. The world itself represents a value, which no man can discard. As a result, the action we take to develop ourselves and our world is essential; for we men are little by little discovering the conscious control, which is in our power, to bring evolution to its completion. The place of intention is safeguarded by Teilhard's emphasis on the necessity of vision, but a man must be fired with his role, miniscule as it may appear, in the actual building of this earth.[7] A man of passion must act.

Attachment and Detachment

With the full meaning of passion in mind, Teilhard also approached the role of attachment and detachment in personal development. In its active meaning, passion suggests the full force of the attachment which Teilhard saw was so necessary for the maintaining of a man's vision; this attachment must eagerly embrace the supports along the way to the fulfillment of that vision. Simultaneously, passion in its active meaning signified all the force which was necessary to break away from a complacency of what has been achieved in order to strive for greater development and more far-reaching goals. In its passive meaning, passion brought to mind all the suffering which is implicit in being detached and not becoming selfishly possessive or individualistic. Teilhard repeated often that there could be no progress in a personal development without man having a passion that leads to detachment as well as a passion that results from detachment. Such an interplay marks the process of personalization; such is the mark of a Christian.

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[7] G. Frénaud, Pensée, p. 37, in discussing The Divine Milieu, claims that intention does not matter for Teilhard. It is difficult to imagine how this interpretation could have been formulated when Teilhard himself emphasizes clearly that a coherence of intention and action is necessary.

Activity and Passivity

In the most all-embracing breakdown of man's life into the two unequal halves of activities and passivities, Teilhard once again stressed the centrality of his passion theme. It would be impossible to read even a smattering of Teilhard's writings dealing with human development without being impressed by the enthusiasm, force, dynamism which he keeps advocating. When we come to the consideration of that greater part of man's life--what he must undergo, Teilhard insists upon passion in its widest extent as the necessary ingredient for making the whole of man's life a forward and upward movement. In our first reaction, we must strive with all our power--passionately--against the various forces which limit or lessen us. At the same time, we should recognize from our vision that only through suffering a diminution of that center which we call our inmost self can we develop and take our place as full persons in the supreme personal--the Universal Christ. At certain moments in the evolutionary development of all created beings, passivity is the foyer to the fuller and better existence. Without a "being-acted-upon" (passion), all true development stops. From his investigations, Teilhard knew that biological evolution has evidence of many dead-ends. Man, too, can consciously try to arrest his own growth by his lack of passion as well as by his failure to accept passion. God's revelation in Christianity does not destroy or annihilate this cosmic movement, but rather assimilates and transfigures it in the mystery of the Cross.

A New Holiness

Christian revelation, with its central message of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, clearly indicates to man the route of his own personal fulfillment, his way to holiness. Teilhard recognized the fact that while he was insistent upon all the traditional mysteries of the Christian religion, his interpretation of them was undergoing no little change. In a letter to his cousin in 1918, Teilhard rather confidently says, "I think we Christians, for our part, have a great need to 'humanize' our sanctity--without, of course, doing violence to the dogmas we hold."[8] Yet only four years later, when he began to re-think the meaning of original sin within an evolutionary framework, he was much more aware of the difficulties and problems in re-casting time-worn thoughts and expressions.

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[8] MM, July 28, 1918, p. 222 (F 288).

> I don't think that in the history of the Church anyone has "pulled off" such an adjustment (in the way of representation) of dogma as that of which we're speaking--though similar attempts have been made and carried half-way, for example, when geocentrism was abandoned. More precisely, one should say that the reformulation of historical views on original sin has been virtually achieved ever since the end of geocentrism; but it is only today that we come explicitly to realize it.[9]

The fact that new formulations or interpretations of traditional dogma would meet with great opposition and misunderstanding did not deter Teilhard from outlining various areas where he knew change was essential in terms of an evolutive worldview. The areas which he chose were all integral to his primarily practical interest--"a new formula to express what is meant by holiness"[10] or, in the terminology of evolution, the greatest personalization of man. Logically, then, he looks at the world and its value, man's role in it and the necessity and value of his work for himself and his world. All of this is interrelated with the role of Jesus Christ as an integral element of the world and mankind, and the meaning of his Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection. This, in turn, reflects back on the origin of evil in our world, with the advent of pain and suffering among living creatures, followed by sin among free and reflective creatures. Consequently, from Teilhard's approach the whole picture of Christian spirituality takes on a very different perspective.[11] In terms of this study, let us examine a little more specifically Teilhard's own understanding of how he differed from the traditional teaching within the areas of detachment and diminishment.

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[9] Letter of May 14, 1922, cited in Rideau, Guide, p. 539, footnote 107. R. Faricy, Theology of the Christian in the World, p. 160, footnote 50, observes that Teilhard's "religious thought cannot logically be accepted piecemeal; if an element as important as his theory of original sin is rejected in its essentials, then much more of his original religious thought must be rejected."

[10] HE, "Le phénomène spirituel," 1937, p. 136.

Effort and Detachment

In his exchange of views with the Catholic philosopher, Maurice Blondel, Teilhard was forced to develop somewhat more at length his own ideas on the role of detachment against a balanced, traditional presentation.[12] Teilhard begins by looking concretely at the environment in which he lives. Clearly no one could deny that a great part of daily activity is human effort directed to material and social development. Man is forced to make the effort by external circumstances, or he will perish. While there is value in recognizing that work is a moralizing force in the growth of man, there remains a certain futility unless the accomplished work itself has a value in the continuing perfection of God's creation.[13] From his reading of Scripture, it seemed apparent to Teilhard that collaborating passionately in the human effort prepares the material, more or less close at hand, of the Pleroma.[14]

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[11] W. van de Pol, The End of Conventional Christianity (New York: Newman, 1968), p. 37, summarizes the piety of conventional Christianity (against which Teilhard was reacting) as marked by a dualism between heaven and earth, between God's kingdom and the world--expressed in many liturgical prayers as "despising the terrestrial and loving the heavenly." Van de Pol emphasizes the many scriptural passages which provide support for such a position.

[12] Cf. Correspondence. This book provides the general framework and background for the rest of this chapter. Blondel represents a progressive viewpoint and still retains a more traditional spirituality. For this reason, he provides a good foil to Teilhard and his more radical recasting. There were two major exchanges between Blondel and Teilhard, each time including a letter to their middleman-contact, Auguste Valensin, plus a longer position paper.

Teilhard stresses that in the course of this hard labor and in the pursuit of an ever widening ideal, it is necessary to achieve "a preliminary form of renunciation and of victory over a narrow and lazy egoism."[15] This preliminary form of renunciation is more commonly specified by Teilhard in his use of the traditional word, detachment. The complete Christian attitude, in his eyes, takes in what appears to be two contradictory properties--detachment and attachment--and harmonizes them. Teilhard acknowledges that the harmony he finds rises out of his preference for the Scriptural interpretation that "the supernatural Pleroma grows out of the natural universe according to a law of transformation, not one of rupture."[16] Rupture, for example, would be represented by the interpretation of the end of the world as a catastrophic destruction or annihilation before the triumph of God, with his "new heaven and a new earth," was made manifest. As we have seen before, transformation according to Teilhard demands both a certain change and still a certain sameness. In the Christic transformation of the world, the supernatural really does affect the elements of the world so that they become "*more* and *other than they were*; at the same time, the natural elements represent the continuity of transformation since they provide the absolutely necessary fuel or suitable material."[17] As Teilhard states succintly, "the supernatural fullness of Christ depends upon the natural fullness of the world."[18]

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[13] Correspondence, n. 1, p. 32.

[14] Ibid., p. 35.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

Teilhard openly confessed that he could not accept at face value certain passages of the Gospel, in which it may seem that Our Lord has given permission to evade the struggle with the world around us. He points out that there can be quite a strong temptation to "*let everything go*--the accumulation of facts, the agitation of ideas, the tumult of societies"[19] in the name of a Christian seeking-only-what-is-above. This is a radical misunderstanding of true Christian detachment. Christ's Incarnation into our world gives insight into our own "incarnating" ourselves in the struggles of our times for a better and fuller life. If a man does retreat, under the false illusion of an effort-detachment opposition, Teilhard predicts that he gradually decreases in his overall effort to grow. As a result, too, there is the consequent "cooling off" of charity, for charity lives on sustained human passion.[20] We must expend great effort, working with specific ideas and individual things in order to attain, whether by our success or by our lack of success, the "joy of sensing the One Necessary Thing."[21] To avoid any misunderstanding that his approach to attachment-detachment might be bound up with only some idea of an earthly millenium, Teilhard emphasizes:

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[17] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

> I do not attribute a definitive or absolute value to the various constructions which man is led to establish through his struggle with the natural order. I believe they will disappear, recast into a totally new, unimaginable plane of existence. But I hold that they play a provisional and essential role--being irreplaceable, unavoidable phases we must go through (we or the race) in the course of our metamorphosis. What I like about them is not their particular form, but their function, which is to build up mysteriously, first what can be divinized, and then, through the grace of Christ, coming down on our endeavor, what is divine.[22]

Teilhard is traditional in emphasizing the necessity of the transformation by Christ. His stress on the equally necessary object of attachment which must be transformed--ourselves and our world--highlights a balance which has been obscured, more in the theory of Christian spirituality than in the actual lives of holy men. Two reasons for this obscurity are immediately apparent. As Teilhard was well aware, the New Testament does provide certain passages which can be interpreted as requiring a clear choice between our interest in God or our interest in the world. The antagonism between God and the world is most blatantly summed up in traditional spirituality by à Kempis' paraphrasing of Scripture, "thou canst not both attend to Me and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things."[23] The second reason for obscurity is our always relative state of knowledge. Before science demonstrated the movement of the solar system, who would deny that Genesis did not present a rather accurate account of the world's beginnings, with our own earth as central to the universe? So, too, at the level of understanding reached by mankind through the 1800 years since Christ, there was little grasp of the idea about a sustained progress in the development of the world and of mankind. As the full light of historical development and evolutionary processes dawned more clearly, Christians were forced to reappraise man's function in the world, his active control and direction of development, and this total complex of issues related to a creative and redeeming God. It was in this context that Teilhard structured his idea of detachment, always necessitated by the effort to move forward.

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 34-35.

Tension is necessary for the balance of truth, and the attempt to maintain this tension is sometimes the reason for Teilhard's stumbling explanations. Even the stress which we have found in his use of the notion of passion is a concrete embodiment of the tension required for living the truth. Teilhard could cry out for a great attachment to things in the world around us, for he was convinced that, with vision, we would find ourselves necessarily detached from them. The very nature of things possesses "a logic, a power of renunciation, of expansion, and of creative death"[24] so that our very attachment detaches us. Unless nature itself had a sort of inborn detachment, no evolutionary development would have taken place. And so nature itself continues to force us to a detachment which is the first step to the human renunciation necessary for personalization.

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[23] Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, Book III, Ch. 53.

Teilhard, then, sees a harmony or a coherence between detachment and human effort. He insists upon the balance of both terms in the ordinary life of the Christian. Just as men follow an infinity of vocations, so, too, is there an infinite number of phases of combining attachment and detachment in a single life. "Within the Church St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Vincent de Paul stand side-by-side with St. John of the Cross."[25] Teilhard does not see saints as being representatives at different or opposite poles of Christian living; rather saints represent gradations along a single spectrum--the personalization of man which embodies his supernatural depersonalization in Christ.

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[24] Correspondence, p. 35.

[25] Ibid.

Christ and Cosmos

With his scientifically based inclination to stress the value of effort, which is self-detaching, in the development of the world, Teilhard naturally emphasized the support which he found in the cosmic texts of St. John and St. Paul on the role of Christ. That Christ was the supreme personal in whom all things had their beginnings and will find their completion was grasped by Teilhard in its literal meaning. To indicate the reality of this cosmic Body of Christ he prefers to attribute to it the troublesome word, physical.[26]

When Maurice Blondel complained that "a purely physical supernaturalism makes no sense whatever,"[27] Teilhard countered with the fact that, even granting Christ is incarnated solely for our supernaturalization, "this itself constrains Him to support and complete the natural strata at one and the same time (in somewhat the way the rational soul, as taught by Scholasticism, takes the place of lower substantial forms)."[28] Though he wants to retain the concrete reality implied in the notion of "physicalness," Teilhard grants in a further exchange with Blondel that he is at a loss in approaching the idea more directly.[29] About the same time, however, Teilhard wrote a brief note on the meaning of the human body.[30] Amid the difficulties of this very brief schema, there is a helpful indicator to the direction of Teilhard's thought. He wrote: "*my* matter is not a *part* of the universe I possess *totaliter*: it is the *totality* of the Universe possessed by me *partialiter*."[31] In a similar way to his expanding the notion of human body in terms of relation to the universe, the Body of Christ is manifested in the concretization of the Universal Christ. Just as the "Universal World=World centered on Peter+ World centered on Paul, and so on,"[32] so the Universal Christ for Teilhard is Christ in his relation to Peter+Christ in his relation to Paul, and so on. Of course, the most tangible manifestation of this relationship is through the Eucharist, the Body of Christ. As a result, the Christian, before all men, can draw upon a unique and singular source for the building up of the "physical" reality of the Universal Christ.[33] From the loving relationship continually strengthened through the physical reality of the Eucharist, the Christian is a further extension of the whole Christ through his own limited person and environment. Yet because Christ in his Body, whether Eucharistic or more largely considered, is not limited to any time and

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[26] C. Mooney, Mystery, pp. 77-85, analyzes carefully the meaning of physical in the context of Christ's body.

[27] Correspondence, p. 25.

[28] Ibid., p. 36.

[29] Ibid., p. 51.

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[30] *SC*, "What Exactly is the Human Body?" ca. 1919, pp. 11ff. (F 31ff).

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 13 (F 34).

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Cf. Mooney, *Mystery*, p. 84, for a similar interpretation.

and place, he truly becomes a milieu, a universal element, the divine foyer whose flames engulf gradually the entire universe.[34]

Teilhard claimed that the study and the appreciation in practical living of the Universal Christ would impose upon all branches of theology--dogmatic, moral, and mystical--a "complete recasting."[35] If Christ is truly universal, the Redemption, and consequently the Fall, must really extend to the whole universe. The cosmic nature of original sin effecting the Fall has been present in tradition, but new dimensions in our knowledge of the universe require a radical restatement of that representation of sin. As a consequence, too, there must follow a renewed understanding of the role of suffering and personal diminishment in the total picture of human and Christian development.

Expiatory Asceticism vs. Asceticism of Cosmic Life

From his experience and observation of life, Teilhard not only affirmed the necessary role of the traditional ascetic death but also insisted on a Christian's integrating this apparently negative side of development into the total pattern of personalization. Although he too confirms the centrality of the Passion in each man's life, he puts it in the context of the knowledge and temper of our times. Union with Christ remains the goal; detachment and diminishment, and eventually death, are essential rhythms in the process of uniting. Teilhard asked himself the question, "how should one visualize ascetic death, the mystic night, Christian renunciation?"[36] He answers in the light of how he understands tradition.

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[34] DM, pp. 103-104 (F 153-54).

[35] SC, "Note on the Universal Christ," 1920, p. 16 (F 40-41).

> The first form of renunciation which comes to mind is that of a cutting off, a rupture with the world, an evacuation, pure and simple, of the old man. St. John of the Cross, read literally, seems to conceive of the night in just this way. Do you want to find God? Close the channels which admit the false, exterior life. When you have done so, "ipso facto" the higher light will shine deep within you.[37]

As long as Christ still remains the definitive world, Teilhard claims that he has no difficulty in accepting this pattern of growth which is based on the extinction of the visible world. But he remains critical of it on two counts. First, it is not able to be lived by men in general, and so does not offer a common pattern of supernatural personalization. Secondly, it rejects so many concrete possibilities of contact with Christ, that it tends to lessen the maximum possible union with Christ here on earth.

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[36] Correspondence, n. 1, p. 31. Teilhard was aware that he was making an interpretation of tradition which was common to his training and milieu. Consequently he recognized that what he wrote was debatable, "as if one could write anything entirely undebatable without repeating what has been said already." Cf. Letter to Bruno de Solages, May 26, 1950, cited in Speaight, Life, p. 98.

[37] Correspondence, n. 1, p. 31. At an earlier date, Dec. 17, 1919, Teilhard wrote: "Renunciation--it must be shown that the 'annihilation' of St. John of the Cross is linked with other levels (states) of Christian life--as an (the) extreme case, but through the same logic of the completion of the cosmos in God. . . ." Cited by H. de Lubac, Correspondence, Ch. 4, pp. 76-77, footnote 7.

Although Teilhard himself does not explicitly mention it, we could assume that from his stress on coherence, the idea of two distinct lights--a higher and a lower, the one demanding the quelling of the other--would jar his whole approach of assimilation and transfiguration. For Teilhard, the conditions of renunciation receive this formulation: to go beyond everything there is in the world, and at the same time to press forward to the development of this same world.[38]

Blondel suggested to Teilhard that he had simplified and altered traditional asceticism as expressed by St. John of the Cross.[39] He points out to Teilhard that the night which St. John commends to us is not

> a suppression or annihilation of reality, even a sensible reality (for things have their existence in darkness); it is an anticipation of the dawn which will return us our faculty of seeing, showing us all the beings which we could not judge or appreciate with our present means of perception.[40]

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[38] Correspondence, n. 1, p. 33.

[39] Ibid., p. 39. Of course, M. Blondel's understanding of St. John of the Cross can also be questioned. For example, Blondel's interpretation of John's "emptiness" is a common oversimplification which Teilhard himself accepts as correctly traditional. As Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., an authority on St. John of the Cross, points out, there is no possibility according to John's teaching of a complete negation or an utter void of both God and creatures. Rather in the measure that the soul has one, it is empty of the other; for the effort of purifying is the positive effort of loving. Cf. "Introduction to the Ascent-Dark Night," esp. pp. 46 and 59, in The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, tr. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., with Introductions by Kieran Kavanaugh (London: Nelson, 1966).

[40] Correspondence, n. 1, p. 39.

Blondel goes on to say that charity is not sustained by human passions ut sic.[41] While Blondel and Teilhard agree that a pure detachment may bind us firmly to everything, (after the manner of St. Francis of Assisi) Blondel restates tradition when he proposes that we in no way reach salutary "emptiness" (which allows God to fill us) through any sort of "fullness."[42] Consequently, the beginnings of such a fullness should not be sought through an involvement with the things of this world.

Teilhard's response clarifies his own re-interpretation of traditional ascetical growth in Christ. Once again he states his conviction that man must first open his arms to embrace God's world, just in order that a vision of this cosmic Christ might become the acknowledged goal of man's consciously chosen evolutionary development. His fear is that "if we had to wait for mystical unification with Christ before we addressed ourselves to the world, we would probably never begin our human effort."[43] In his usual manner, Teilhard sees an extension into things and a concentration into Christ as two movements which give a coherence and a balance in ordinary Christian growth. "He who seeks in all things an element which is forever out of reach in the direction of effort and enlargement is one who achieves real self-abnegation and inner coherence."[44]

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[41] Ibid., n. 2, p. 45.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 50.

Teilhard can agree with Blondel and the tradition which he so eloquently states that it is the "emptiness" in ourselves which, filled by God, becomes enriching and beatifying. At the same time, he knows that he differs from the spirutual tradition common to his time in setting forth the conditions of that "emptiness." In the style of the Christian paradox that is inherent in life, Teilhard proposes that (1) the "emptiness" which attracts God can only be hollowed out in the core of a pre-existing "fullness"; (2) something remains of this "fullness" and it is assimilated into the God-filling "emptiness"; (3) the spiritual power of matter lies in the very logic of man's development which leads him to the desire to enter something greater than himself.[45] Teilhard remains consistent in his understanding of this movement in Christian growth: first, activity and the endeavor to succeed; secondly, a passivity which is essential for the process of excentration--a shifting of centers--for greater or fuller development.

Pushed back to its ultimate source, the question can be formulated: what is the meaning of Christ's Passion, his suffering, his diminishment, his Cross? Teilhard never denies any expiatory or compensatory value which has traditionally been present in our understanding of the Passion.[46]

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[44] Ibid., p. 51.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Phillipe de la Trinité, O.C.D., Rome et Teilhard de Chardin, pp. 102-104, is upset precisely about Teilhard's lack of emphasis on

But he looks for a more cosmic and evolutively integral meaning which he felt our own age demands. He sees the Cross as summing up the inseparable alliance of personal progress and renunciation, with the continual and eventually final ascendancy of the second over the first.[47] For Jesus Christ " 'to carry the sins of a culpable world' is identical to, transferrable with, and transposed into the terms of a cosmogenesis, 'to carry the weight of a world in the process of evolution.' "[48] Rather than the Cross receive its total emphasis from a remedying of the past, in Teilhard's approach, the Cross synthesizes two composing elements of the future--the transcendent and the ultra-human, or, as he more commonly calls it, the upward and the forward.[49]

Since Jesus Christ was born, reached his full manhood, and died on a cross, "everything has continued in motion because he has not yet attained the fullness of his form."[50] The Universal Christ has not come to the fullness of his growth because he is still gathering about him "the last folds of the garment of flesh and love woven for him by his faith-

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reparation and vicarious satisfaction. As G. Crespy, Pensée, pp. 109-134 and 217, and E. Rideau, Guide, pp. 169-174, note, Teilhard is more faithful to the logic of his vision than to the biblical evidence.

[47] DM, p. 76 (F 115).

[48] "Ce que le monde attend en ce moment de l'église," 1952, ms., pp. 4-5.

[49] Ibid.

[50] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 59 (F 48).

ful."[51] In our activity in building up this Christ who is and yet who is becoming, we find that the world and the duty of serving the world are hard to bear like a cross. Teilhard claims that it was "to force us to believe this that Christ wished, overlooking all the highways of the earth, to rise up in the form of the Crucifix, the symbol in which every man could recognize his own true image."[52] The truth about our position in this world, Teilhard maintains, is that "in it we are on a Cross."[53]

From the statistical necessity implied in an evolutionary perspective, we must be willing to accept the fact that everything which becomes suffers or sins. If physical and moral evil are inherent in the process of a genesis, everything that evolves has its own sufferings and commits its own faults.[54] In a static universe, this fact of experience could be quite disconcerting, and unpleasant, with the result that expiation became a somewhat convenient and satisfying explanation. When evolution became more and more an accepted framework in which to view our universe, we grew vastly more aware of our responsibility to build and to construct. Pain and suffering are now seen in the context of effort and a forward movement. The Cross appears to the Christian as the "symbol of the arduous labor of Evolution."[55]

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., p. 67 (F 56).

[53] Ibid. G. Crespy, Pensée, pp. 97-98, holds that Teilhard's originality lies in the fact that he sees the mystery of the Cross operating everywhere in creation. For the Cross makes manifest this inevitable law: creation takes place through failure and sorrow.

[54] G. Crespy, From Science to Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 113, understands Teilhard to be saying that "evil is evil only as a consequence of a passion for the best."

Teilhard admits that his "ascesis underlying 'cosmic life' " has a very different emphasis from the traditional expiatory one. By tradition, suffering or diminishment is a punishment, an expiation:

> its effectiveness is that of a sacrifice: it is born of a sin, and makes reparation for sin. It is good to suffer, in order to master oneself, conquer and free oneself.[56]

Teilhard saw that his vision did effectively re-cast this whole attitude to Christian diminishment. It is true that the Cross means going beyond the boundaries of the sensible world, and, at a certain point not of our choosing but God's, allowing oneself to be broken from it.[57] Despite the certain newness of the holiness which he was setting forth, Teilhard asked the question: doesn't this law of the Cross only repeat in a sublime way the law common to all life? "The royal road of the Cross is no more nor less than the road of human endeavor supernaturally righted and prolonged."[58] Passionately desiring that our human endeavors be transformed or transfigured, we can view the Cross not as something inhuman, but superhuman. Death in Christ is not a death leading to the impersonal, but to the supreme personal.

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[55] WTW, "Cosmic Life," 1916, p. 71 (F 61).

[56] Ibid., p. 71 (F 60).

[57] DM, p. 78 (F 118).

[58] Ibid. In his 1941 retreat, Teilhard jotted down the note: "Christian asceticism is simply the expression of one cosmic law." Cf. H. de Lubac, L'éternel féminin, p. 137, footnote 3.

Each man's personal development becomes his Passion. In the spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin, there is ultimately only one calling: we must be men of passion.

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